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POEMS AND ROMANCES

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POEMS AND ROMANCES

BY GEORGE AUGUSTUS SIMCOX

AUTHOR OF 'PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.'



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Prologue.

TO THE BELOVED.

MY holy love of many names,
Whose face I have not seen,
With rosy dews and subtle flames
Anointed for a queen.

Ganore, Lucilla, Amalie,
Queen, orphan, anchoress,
As you are lovely, pardon me
Who mar your loveliness.

Though you have sweeter names, I know,
For holier lips to sing,
On me too sometimes deign to throw
The shadow of a wing.

I never have had long to look
When you were passing by,
Along the hawthorn-scented brook,
Athwart the evening sky.

I only catch, from far away,
Between the day and night,
Now here, now there, a single ray
From all your "world of light ;"

Yet you are sweeter than the day,
And brighter than the sun,
And, whatsoever weak lips say,
The spirit owns thee one.

You seem to sin, but you are pure ;
You seem to fall, but stand ;
Your throne of opal shall endure
Upon the King's right-hand.

Yet you are not a saint, I think,
For if this life were sweet,
You would not ask for gall to drink,
Or thorns to wound your feet.

The saints renounced the world untried ;
 You tried, and found it loss ;
Therefore you shelter at their side,
 Beneath the flowering cross.

One saint I hardly know from you,
 The gentle martyr maid,
Who hallowed, with sweet blood and true,
 Fair Daphne's laurel glade.

Like you she was compassionate,
 Like you she feared to die ;
Like her you reign inviolate,
 And bountiful on high.

Though lower, yet your feet are set
 Upon the glassy sea ;
Pray to your sister Margaret
 To pray to God for me.

THE FAREWELL OF GANORE.

GANORE was standing at the convent gate
With Lancelot, and she held him by the hand,
And in the fierce noon of a harvest day
They both looked forth upon a wasted land ;
And Queen Ganore was in her royal state
Of widowhood, as when she kept at bay
The rabble, when they hungered for her death,
Saying, “ Surely Arthur will not come again
Till that lewd sorceress be foully slain.”
But she had stood for her own life and fame
Until from Lyonesse Sir Lancelot came,
Unblenching, though old memories choked her
breath.

Lancelot was travel-stained, and all his face
Was flushed, and clouded by an eager doubt ;
His eyes were heavy with the tears of grace,
And, bending to his love, he faltered out

Penitent words, with stifled sobs between,
“ Alas, and yet again alas, my Queen,
That ever we met and one another knew ;
For all the ill that reckless hate can do,
My loyal, scrupulous love hath done to you ;
For through my loyal love your lord is slain,
Your lord and mine, who bred me up to knight ;
And on your womanhood is come a stain
Of treason, which no oaths will e’er wash white,
And all your joy is hidden out of sight.
But I will leave my realm of Lyonesse
In peace, for Galahad my chaste son to rule ;
And in the wilderness my sad heart school
To worship God, and pray for you aright ;
Because this world is very pitiless,
To make us buy with sin its brief delight.”

Trembling he spoke, and looking up to her,
But she stood upright, looking far away,
With a hot glory on her golden head ;
Her scarcely sunken cheek was flushed full fair,
Not at his words, but at the fierce sun ray :
Then, bending on him eyes which were not red,
With lofty, motherly regard, she said,
Smoothing his tangled curls with soft cool hand,

“Yea, and is Lyonesse a peaceful land?
God give you comfort of it, as you grow
Sadly to heaven, in your bleak hermitage,
For surely Britain shall sit down in woe,
Since Arthur died with all his baronage.
Farewell, my friend, whom I shall see no more,
For even in heaven we shall dwell apart
Where God, who came between us heretofore,
Seals up within himself weak heart from heart.”

She took him, and she kissed him on the brow,
And bade him go in peace to keep his vow,
And saw him ride away, and did not start,
But listened till his echoing tramp had died
Upon the granite of the bleak hillside ;
Then, when she knew that Lancelot would not hear,
She loosed her voice and made complaint aloud.
The nuns behind her shivered in much fear,
Seeing her stand beneath a thundercloud
Which suddenly had overshadowed her ;
But where they stood the arch of heaven was clear,
And from the cloud an icy wind, which fell
From heaven to probe the fiery heart of hell,
Through underground, deep-echoing caverns bore
The lamentation of the Queen Ganore :—

“ Alone for evermore.

I watched him, and he did not turn his head,
And I shall be alone till I am dead ;
Alone for evermore.
And I would weep a little ere I die,
And all the fountain of my tears is dry,
Which heretofore
With many vain desires my true love fed,
While I believed the oaths that Lancelot swore ;
But now I do not weep, I feel no pain ;
I tell myself aloud my lord is slain,
I tell myself my love is gone away,
Never to come again ;
And find no passionate true word to say,
But only this unmeaning cuckoo cry,
Alone until I die.

“ Surely these words are sharp enough to slay
One who did once love well,
Or scourge me out of the bleak, desolate day
Into meek cloister cell ;
But I, I loiter still outside the door,
Alone for evermore.

Through me the fiery river of life hath flowed
Hot and clear with love and sin ;
Through me and over me, and I have glowed
Body and soul therein.
And then I was not molten in that heat
Nor broken ; I was wise and it was sweet.
And now the river hath gone by,
And left me cold and dark and dry,
Cast on a slimy bank accursed.
Also I know that this is not the worst ;
But each day will be drearier till I die.
Arthur could weep for me, why cannot I ?
O Arthur, O my perfect knight,
And thou didst pity me,
Not knowing that I loved thee even then,
Who love thee now much more, not pitying thee,
Since now thou judgest in God's tender light
Rightly of me and men.
Yes, God will make you understand
Those bitter things I would not say,
Thinking it easier, kinder to deceive.
But now you will not grieve
Where you are sitting by the glassy sea,
On a great ivory throne at God's right-hand,—

God's hand who cut you off from me,
Who made me of such different clay.
I love thee much too well to weep for thee,
Who art gone home,—gone home to thy reward,
Arthur, my Arthur once, my gentle lord.

“ I have desired and I have not attained ;
And I have given and I have not received ;
And I have lived and nought is gained
Of all those goodly things my youth believed.
I have lived, do I say ?
And yet I have to live
Long, very long, before I pass away,
Before my beauty and my strength decay,—
My strength, which hath been helpful heretofore ;
My beauty, which no knights shall worship more.
I asked of Arthur what he could not give ;
I gave what Lancelot could not repay.
My God, what shall I say ?
And Arthur asked of me
To live in dreams, hoping what shall not be ;
And Arthur asked in vain.
Because we asked how many have been slain !
Wilt thou require their blood of me ?

And Lancelot is parted now in pain,
Because I am less sorrowful than he,
And still could have been happy out of thee ;
But thou, it seems, dost otherwise ordain.
And unto earth is sunshine after rain,
But unto us no gladness after pain,
Or none that may endure,
None that is pure.
But when the storm is past,
The sky laughs without stain ;
While sorrow doth our spirits overcast
With clouds that do not wash them white again.
Yet how shall I complain
That Arthur loved too little, I too much ;
That Lancelot's hot love shrivelled at the touch
Of thy disdain ?
Yea, how shall I complain
Of thee, my God, with whom I hope to reign ?
For this is all of thee.
I made thee not, thou madest me.
Doubtless I might have striven against the stream,
Labouring to live in Arthur's knightly dream.
He might have folded me in arms of love
More closely, though his eyes were set above.

But not by us the river of our woe
Was fed with vain desires, or learned to flow
Through flowery mountains to a barren plain ;
And since we drifted many have been slain,
And very many homes are desolate ;
And yet, behold, I curse thee not, O God !
Though men curse me ;
Because I do not think it is in hate
That we are beaten down before thy rod,
Which flowers, though late.
And I am tired, and it is rest to wait ;
And one grief comes to drive another out,
And turbulent desire is purged by doubt ;
And this too is of thee,
To bring us very low and set us free.
For Arthur verily is dead,
So I am not in bondage to his bed ;
And Lancelot is gone to keep his vow ;
I am not debtor unto any now.
I do not think that I shall tarry here,
To teach these pitiful nuns to hold me dear ;
But I will out into the wilds, and know
If Lancelot and the priests have told me true,
If I in very deed am fallen so low

That I should be as they,
Whose very hearts are grey ;
And yet Christ is their spouse, they say,
Whose mercy I need too."

And then she paused in her lament, and sighed,
And spake again, " Men only have I tried,
And they have shallow hearts, and so have I.
I will away from them before I die,
And be a little child and taste the summer-tide.
I will away ; the sunny world is wide,—
And desolate," her aching heart replied.

Yet not the less she bade the nuns farewell
In courteous words, and covered up her pride,
Saying, " O my sisters, it is yours to hide
For ever in your Husband's wounded side.
Yet He, you know, ere he was crucified,
Went forth into the wilderness to dwell,
And taste, before the Cross, the might of Hell ;
And I must meet Him there, and there be tried."
Nor knew she whether she spake truth, or lied,
Of some fierce trial which she thought to bide.
So the nuns kissed her, and they shut the door,

Who neither on that day nor any more
Beheld again the beauty of Ganore.
But, as one stealing silently from thrall,
The Queen went softly by the cloister-wall,
Where the green moss deadened her light footfall.
Turning away from the waste harvest-lands,
Which at that time were desolate with war,
Upon whose edge the quaint peaked convent stands
Upon a little knoll of jutting moor,
Jutting into a sea of yellow corn,
Bounded by a grey scoop of granite shore,
Too thinly veiled by withered bents forlorn,
Where Lancelot had ridden, but Ganore
Would have died rather than have followed him.
And round the knoll the fringe of copse was dim
With tangled glades she had not trod before,
And she passed into them, and was content ;
For through the copse a leaping river went,
Tawny between the purple-lichened rocks :
Ripe iris-heads were green among the bent,
And here and there a spike of foxglove grew,
Where through the twisted oaks the sun broke
through ;
And overhead was a soft noise of flocks,

Feeding on purple, overarched with blue.
So she went stumbling softly through the shade,
By a green path made rough with roots and stones,
Where still, I think, the fly of summer drones,
But no queen stumbles upward through the glade.
But then a dreamy queen went fingering
At reddening berries and at fading flowers,
Kissing them often as she wandered on,
In happy memory of those early hours,
Unclouded by the grim dreams of the King,
When she and Lancelot had often gone
Together, in glad lowland woods, in May;
And all that happiness was past away
For ever, and she knew it, but a sleep
Was on her soul; she saw quaint shadows play
Under the leaves, and she forgot to weep;
And something in her heart began to pray,
And magnify God's mother, queen of spring
And harvest, in a little childish lay,
For very gladness of that glorious day.
And from the birckenshaw a milk-white doe
Kissed the Queen's feet, who went on pilgrimage;
Then fluttering out of her fair woodland cage,
Her eyes took wing, seeing a great lake glow

In azure set between two golden hills,
Golden with furze and fading birch below ;
Above was purple heath, which fed the rills
That leapt in silver round the rocky head,
With double cirque of green encompassed ;
Where grey turf hung between grey crags of stone,
But in the light the grass was golden green.
Then at her left Ganore espied a crone,
Branded as bondmaid to the Holy Grail,
Who wore her white hair woven for a veil,
Crowned with gold rays, for she too was a queen,
And sat upon the black coils of a snake,
And her blue feet hung down in the blue lake,
Nailed to an iron cross, but did not bleed ;
And backwards she was spelling out a creed.
But higher up she saw a white flock feed,
And upon each there were three locks of red,
And in the figure of the cross they fed ;
Their shepherd was a boy in gay attire
Of many colours, with a crook of gold ;
He lay as haply fifteen summers old,
But where his face should be there was a fire,
Whence came a carolling how the stars should pale
Before the radiance of the Holy Grail.

Ganore beheld, and did not think it strange,
For all these sights were fixed in the bright day,
And seemed as if they could not pass away,
But had been uncontaminate by change
Since the world was, abiding in one stay.
Wherefore Ganore, beholding, only sighed,
“How many of the Table would have died,
And held the forfeit of life’s earthly bliss
Too cheap a purchase for a sight like this!”
But to the shepherd-boy the old Queen cried,
“When wilt thou take her captive to the Grail?”
But from the fire there came a sighing wail,
“How can I, for her love is crucified?”
Whereat Ganore fled up the steep hillside
Towards the right, but one of that fair flock
Leapt from the shadow of a brambly rock,
And thenceforth went before her for a guide;
But when Ganore laid hand upon its head,
Her hand, and all the wool it touched, were red.
So they pushed on together through the brake,
And ever as they clomb Ganore looked down
Over the steep green slope to the blue lake,
And marvelled, “How if once my steps should
slide!”

And thought she saw far off the old Queen frown.
But when they won the crest of that glad slope,
Ganore was disappointed of her hope
To look upon new lands and a new sky ;
Only she saw an upward stretching moor,
Where in the treacherous peat the black pools lie,
And no heath grew thereon, but rushes hoar :
And these were autumn hued, and all the green
Was moss, wherethrough the still moor waters
run.

And as she journeyed on, the lonely queen
Looked up into the sky, and missed the sun,
And missed the shapely peaks of splintered rock,
And missed the shepherd with his magic flock,
And shuddered in the wailing evening wind,
And saw the country gleam below, behind,
In the warm brilliance of the sun's broad ray ;
And said, " Alas for those who walk on high,
Because for them the sun makes haste to set !"
And then she spake again, " O God, forget
My sin, and give me light before I die,"
For the chill purple air was full of death ;
Nor knew she how one little ridge of clay
Shut out the glorious deathbed of the day.

And then she went a little further on,
Hanging her head because the light was gone,
And stumbled in the reeds, and caught her breath ;
For suddenly she stood against the sky,
And close beneath her lay a breadth of sea,
Plashing against a space of weedy shore,
Still dripping from the ebbing waves, and bright
With bars of purple, flecked with ruddier gold,
For on the left the thunderclouds were rolled
Each upon each, to slumber through the night,
And through their curtains glared the fiery sun.
But in the east, upon the right, Ganore
Saw a dim purple clinging round the sea,
Like a dim veil that clings about a nun ;
And a soft rose flushed the chill middle sky,
And in the rose, the young moon rode on high ;
But Queen Ganore fell down, and bent the knee,
Trembling alone at God's great majesty.
Then she went down, slowly with knocking knees,
Catching at tufts of grass and stunted trees,
By a dry watereourse, and heard the breeze
Hiss over the steep slope of loose dry stone,
And crossed her bleeding hands, and bowed her
head :

“ If I die here,—what matter were I dead !
None will lament for me, I am alone.”
But she died not, but gained the lonely shore,
And saw the white sheep skipping on before,
And waxed more hopeful following where it led
Still to the west, and it was twilight now,
And in the twilight every rocky brow
Showed sharp and clear against the ghost of day,
Against clear hungry spiritual grey.
But, with the sun, the wind had died away ;
So all was peace, and you could scarcely hear
The loving splash of the returning tide,
As though some tender angel hovering near
Made all things to forget their strength and pride.
And so in peace, Ganore turned round a rock
Sharply, and she was in a little bay,
Fronting the perfect circle of the west ;
And on the sands a little shallop lay
Ready to float upon the ebb to sea,
Wherein was neither anchor, helm, nor oar,
But one fair sail of purple wrought with gold,
And in the sheets a little crimson fold,
Wherein a scroll in silver words to say,
“ For the espousals of the Queen Ganore.”

Whereat the queen was troubled when she read,
And knew that she was taken in the bay,
For now on either side the full sea rolled ;
So she, adventuring on the mystery,
Sat in the boat, and took upon her knee
The patient firstling of the magic flock,
And waited, bowing down her black veiled head
Over her white hands folded on her breast,
And after her long journey took sweet rest,
Where, on the solitary, rock-bound shore,
The balmy night came down upon Ganore.

LUCILLA.

LUCILLA took three roses,
Two red ones and a white,
To journey in the morning
To Castle Heart's Delight.

She did not fear the journey,
The dawn was dewy bright,
And evermore the Castle
She loved was full in sight,
Though she must pass a desert
To find her own true knight.

She took three dewy roses,
And bathed them in the well,
Whose water had more virtue
Than I have grace to tell.

Of this you may be certain,
Whether she went or stayed,
The white rose gave her sunshine,
And the red roses shade.

A lion walked behind her,
A white dove flew before,
And so she took her journey
Along the river shore.

At first she went on bluebells,
Her kirtle swept the dew,
And then on briar-roses
That pierced her white feet through.

And then upon a meadow
Whose grass was fair to see,
And yet as she crossed over
She sank above her knee.

She came into a cornfield ;
Her lily feet were sore ;
And as she sat and rested
She heard the lion roar.

She passed from out the cornfield,
And stones were on the shore ;
She could not see the white dove,
It flew so far before.

And ever as she journeyed,
Still hotter grew the day ;
The Castle as she neared it
Showed yet more far away.

The sky was hot above her,
The sand was hot below,
The roses in her bosom
Began to burn like snow.

And though she went in sunshine,
Clouds blackened all around,
An evil smell of corpses
Steamed up from the dry ground.

Whenas the clouds were scattered,
She stood upon a plain ;
Before her and behind her
Were men and women slain,

And as the sun was setting
There fell a bloody rain.

Before her and behind her
Stood up three caitiff men,
And suddenly the Castle
Had vanished from her ken.

Lucilla was a-weary,
Yet would not leave her quest,
The white dove's wings were drooping,
It nestled in her breast.

The first of all the caitiffs
Said, " You shall come with me,
Unto our master's palace
Under the pearly sea."

Lucilla said, " I journey
Unto my own true knight,
At midnight is my bridal
In Castle Heart's Delight."

Then all laid hands upon her,
Lucilla veiled her head,

They drew their swords to slay her,
And not a word she said,
But as she kissed her roses,
They fell among the dead.

She looked for light or landmark
In the dark desert land,
For even her dear roses
Had vanished from her hand.

Next moment she was standing
Alone on the seashore,
And then she saw the Castle,
And heard the lion roar.

She stood alone and bleeding,
And she was sore afraid ;
She looked to see a vessel,
And none were near to aid.

She said, " Though I were willing
On pilgrimage to die,
It would be very bitter
Now, with the goal so nigh."

The white dove's wings were stronger,
She flew up into heaven ;
Lucilla saw the stars shine out
Until she counted seven.

The white dove up in heaven
Flew far into the west ;
Lucilla sat to watch her
With spirit full of rest.

With open jaws the lion
Sprang at her white-veiled head ;
Lo, as it sank in slumber,
The lion vanishèd.

Her head was bowed in slumber,
The night wind froze her breath ;
Peering beneath her eyelids
She saw the face of death.

They found her in the morning
Beside the cottage door,
Lying beneath three rose-trees
Which grew not there before.
Her robes were stained with travel,
Her maiden flesh with gore.

So they cut down the rose-trees,—
Two red ones and a white,—
And said, “We will not journey
To Castle Heart’s Delight,
Nor leave our village true-loves
For any fairy knight.”

But still the Chrisom children,
In waking dreams at night,
See Queen Lucilla beckon
From Castle Heart’s Delight.

JUDICIUM VENERIS.

Romæ.

Dicat URBANUS PAPA.

WHAT is this growing through my hand,
That hurts me like a knife?*

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL, adsistens fratris minoris
habitu.

Father, you shall understand
That the Cross, which was brought from Holy Land,
Was made of the Tree of Life,
Which groweth in Paradise far away;
But the Cross shall grow on the Judgment Day,
And overshadow the earth;

And a piece thereof in your staff is set,
And it grows to-day, for it is wet
 With a dew of passing worth,
With one loving tear of a penitent,
To whom ye said, " Ere thou repent
 My dry staff shall be green."
And this is the answer which God hath sent,
 For He will have it seen
That it is evil in His eyes
 That ye should think of ease,
So He maketh your light words prophecies,
 Because ye keep His keys.

Dicat URBANUS PAPA.

Draw forth the sharp leaves from my hand,
 And give me of thy rede,
Where I may send, by sea or land,
 To help that knight at need.

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL.

He is surely gone to the sorceress,
For ye made Christ's sheep to be comfortless,
 Whom He gave to you to feed.

Dicat URBANUS PAPA.

If he is gone to her again,
I fear me it will be but vain,
Yet I will send with speed.

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL.

Father, take heed lest you despair,
For though the she-devil be very fair,
Another is fairer still;
And ye must strengthen my heart with prayer
As I journey to Venus' hill.
But give to me the holy veil,
Imprinted with the visage pale
Of Him who died on rood;
And give me the lean portraiture
Of Margaret, a lady pure,
Who died in widowhood.
For he shall look on the sorceress,
And he shall look on these,
And choose Christendom or heathenesse
As he himself shall please.

Dicat URBANUS PAPA.

If he shall not return with thee,
Then God shall require his blood of me.

In Monte Veneris.

Dicat MILES.

O lady, of thy bounty comfort me,
And teach me to forget.

Dicat VENUS.

See, all my beauty is made bare to thee,
As hath been never yet.

Dicat MILES.

My cheeks are shrunk and miserably defiled
With fasting, dust and sleet, and travel sweat,
But those soft, ruddy lips have always smiled,
Though while I was away the eyes were wet.

Dicat VENUS.

Lay thyself down within my arms, my love,
My beauty is made soft beneath thy head,
And never earthly king or saint above
Slept woe away on such a lovesome bed.

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL, ad montis ostium.

Open unto the message of the Lord,
In Whom His soldiers have their sure reward.

Et sponte patefiat montis ostium, tum VENUS dicat.
Alas, alas, is this the Judgment Day ?

Et MILES dicat.
Alas, is God too angry to delay ?

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL.
Be not afraid, O valiant knight of God,
Behold the blossoming of Aaron's rod,
Sent quickly, for He hasteneth to forgive,
Because He will not have thee die, but live.

Dicat VENUS.
I, O my love ! am here for thee alone,
God lets too many kneel around His throne :
My love, my lord, thou wilt not leave me twice,
Me, the sweet altar of thy sacrifice.

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL.
O knight, thy lady sits in Paradise,
And never yet, by any dear device,
 Could God or any angel comfort her ;
For God shines down upon her tenderly,
 And all who overcome are gathered there,

Where His sweet glory shines for all to see ;
But it is hidden by her tears for thee,
For she sits mourning, praying without cease,
And all her prayer is alway for thy peace.
And her tears fall into a certain well,
As clear as crystal and as deep as hell,

And there they change into a bitter fire,
Which sputters round a place of stinging mire,
Where this foul sooceress is ordained to dwell ;
But thou, I trust in God, shall never come,
For knighthood's honour and for Christendom.

But though she hath the pearl of passing price,
She must sit mourning alway till thy death,
Or till thou stand alive before God's throne,
For she shall know thee then as thou art known ;
And if thou cleave unto the sooceress,
Then that must be the end of her distress,
For she must see thee then as God shall see,
And put thy love away from her, and be
At peace, with only God ; but now she saith

Unless she have thee God will not suffice ;
Wherefore, dear brother, bear to be forgiven,
And be her gladness evermore in heaven.

Dicat MILES.

Good brother, I remember, long ago,
How, when I journeyed back from Palestine,
I came to that red castle by the Rhine
Which was my lady's dwelling heretofore ;
And all the air was balmy with the spring,
But when I knocked in trembling at the door,
Thinking, " Although I famish for my saint,
How can I bear to see her and not faint ?"
But when one answered whom I did not know,
That she was gone, I felt the clutch of woe,
And knew I was to be a lonely thing ;
But all that day I fought, and all that night,
To think that I should find my old delight
Somewhere, and so be rested after pain,
Or that they lied and she would come again ;
And so I roamed about the holy ground
Seeking, three days and nights, but when I found
No answer to my weary questioning,
Then suddenly I heard a clear voice sing,
" Though she whom thou hast lost was very fair,
Yet thou shalt find Queen Venus fairer still,
Nursing her beauty for thee, if thou dare
Break the charmed precinct of her jewelled hill."

Then a glad hunger flushed me through and through,
My blind flesh tingled in me for delight,
As the stars tingled in the vaulted night,
And under the deep overhanging blue,
Singing, "She waits," I leapt, and, ere I knew,
Lo, I was standing at a rocky door,
With ferns and crimson moss enamelled o'er,
And as I sang "She waits," it opened wide.
"She waits," the echoes answered, in I leapt,
And found the pearl of beauty where she slept
On jewels, with Love's arrows at her side,
And in her waking smile was satisfied.
And there I basked, they tell me, a long while,
A hundred of your years in that one smile;
And if I fretted for dull earth again,
Yet I am wiser now and love my chain;
For I was further much from true content,
Upon that dreary journey which I went
Unto his seat who bears the keys of God;
For often I remembered on my way,
When all beside were merry on their quest,
What I should lose until the Judgment Day:
And how I must not venture to be gay,
Because my mourning steps had gone astray.

So lamely, slowly, loiteringly I trod,
Doing no service unto God or her,
Because regret and fear outsting despair,
But now she shuts me in upon her breast,
Who is my sin, my punishment, my rest.

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL.

Sir Knight, according as I have been told,
Thy lady too was very fair of old ;
So fair, that one was sent of God to say
How the sweet shining of her house of clay
Was stealing secretly thy heart away
From God, and from thy portion in His grace ;
And hearing this she covered up her face,
And fled to a strait cloister over sea,
Where she might pray in widowhood for thee ;
But would not take the veil or holy vows
Which sever ladies from an earthly spouse,
Singing, " I loved my knight ere I loved God,
And though God take my love to be His rod,
Yet if I bear love's cross, love crowneth me.

So for his love I cannot be a nun,
For whose sweet sake I left my worldly glee."
There sojourning she saw in mystery
The miserable evil thou hast done.

And then her prayers were turned to bitterness,
But still she cried upon her God to bless
Thee, almost dearer than her God to her,
Praying to have thy punishment to bear.
Now look upon her face who died for thee,—
Her face, whom thou hast slain unwittingly,
For as she panted in her agony,
And all the nuns knelt weeping round her bed,
She beckoned to the Abbess, and she said,
“Dear mother, limn my face when I am dead,
And send it unto Rome, that he may see
For whom I die, and write thereon for me,
‘She hath no joy of God until thou come,’
For he will seek again to Christendom
Surely, and fall before Saint Peter’s chair,
For she with whom he tarries now is fair;
But if he look on this he cannot bear
To wound me dead by hankering after her.”

Dicat MILES.

I do not wonder that I loved her well.
It must be long, ay, very long ago
Since I forsook her for the bliss of hell;
And yet as it were yesterday, I know

The yellow hair and steadfast eyes of brown,
Half open, and so tender to look down
Upon me, for I used to find it sweet
To sit on a low stool before her feet,

And put one hand upon her knee and one
About her waist, to feel her true heart beat.

No, even now she is not like a nun.
A nun should have a seal upon her lips ;
But these, methinks, are thirsty even now.

A nun should have much peace upon her brow,
Clouding her eyelids with a bashful rest ;
Her swollen eyelids tremble in eclipse
Beneath a trouble that might be a frown.

Only her love still keeps the hope awake,
That makes her fear to seem to chide or strive,
And hides the very fear for hope's sweet sake.
A nun should have cool hands, and lightly prest
Cross-wise, upon a scarcely heaving breast ;
These dear hands quivered to the finger-tips,
Clutching, no doubt, to save my soul alive.

God help me, I could almost love her yet.
God help me, I was ready to forget
The great things which my love hath done for me ;
For when I was alone and desolate,
She did not keep me standing at her gate,

But took me in and made me free of her ;
And when my craven folly sought to flee
From her whose vassalage is liberty,
She laughing said, " I keep the best of thee."

And when I came again, though loath and late,
She having mercy on my low estate,
Was much more bountiful and debonnaire.
How should I wish or struggle to be free ?
She hath had my youth, my hope, the best of me.

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL.

Give Jesus what is left, or let Him take,
And God will count it holy for His sake.

Et ostendat Sanctam Faciem, tum dicat MILES.

Is this the face of Jesus, called the Christ ?
I think in some mad war in Palestine,
About an empty tomb, a broken shrine,
In happy dreams I saw, or seemed to see,
A face like this smile grandly down on me
For guerdon of my feats of chivalry ;
But He was crowned and vested royally,
And in His sceptre shone a pearl unpriced,
In which I saw another face like mine,

But fairer, as a saint's in heaven might be,
And sometimes a sweet woman's face shone
through,

And looked at me as one who fain would kiss,
Then faded into me ; and then my bliss
Was full, and I was happier than I knew.

We never know our joy until we miss ;
I say it, having twice approved it true.

Ay me, alas ! And He came down to this ;
Came down from heaven, and trod earth's narrow
ways,

And eat earth's sodden fruit of cloudy days,
And fasted, praying long bleak nights for me ;

And when He saw how hard I was to save,
His sweat ran down like blood for agony.

He saw God's anger overshadowing me,

And yet He would not leave me for a slave,
But pressed on, panting, to the shameful tree,
And let the sharp nails rend him, limb by limb,
To see if He could bury in His grave

The sin God bound on me when I was made,
And always tried to answer when I prayed,
Although He knew He could not set me free.

And this was His dear face, so bruised, so dim,
Though He shall judge me, I must weep for Him.

Dicat VENUS.

Beloved, let me kiss away thy tears,
We have much joy laid up for many years.

Dicat MILES.

Beloved, weep a little while with me,
For I have often wept for love of thee.

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL.

How shall she weep, for she hath seen His face
In heaven of old, and spat upon His grace ?

Dicat VENUS.

Hence, Raphael, take thy sickly wares away ;
Here I am mistress till the judgment day.

Dicat MILES.

O Raphael, was the face of Asmodai
As fair as hers, whom one would woo to slay ?

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL.

Dear knight, I think I ought to answer "Yes ;"
Though I indeed can only speak by guess
About the shapes of things that seem to you ;
For seeing God, whom you will also see,

I see both Asmodai and Venus true ;
So neither can seem beautiful to me.

Dicat MILES.

Too soon, too soon, thou hast made me desolate.
What were some thousand years for God to wait,
That He should send thee with soft words to slay,
Who is the same to-day and yesterday ?

What? Is this perfect beauty all a dream ?
This floating mist of ebon curls that roll
Like healing incense round my fainting soul ?

Dear mist, through which one sees the rosy gleam
Flush the full cheeks and pearly sloping brow,
Down to the palpitating throat as now,

When all the face comes forward to the kiss.
O subtle fire of liquid slumbrous eyes !
O tinkling laugh, sweet words, and sweeter sighs !
O love ! O sweetness not to be expressed !
O languor of unutterable rest !

And was the holy beggar then so wise,
Who spake much rather what he wished than
guessed ?

What warrant have I but the shaveling lies ?
Surely he lies, and God will spare me this !

My heaven on earth, while holy Hörsel stands.
Ay me! what blood is this upon my hand?

Et genibus flexis, SANCTUS RAPHAEL adoret sanguinem
Domini, osculans manus militis, et dicat.

Be sure, O knight, this is the blood of God,—
God's blood, whom thou to-day hast crucified,
Poured sweetly from His ever open side,
To water the fair blossoms of the rod,
Hewn from the tree of life, which else had died.

Dicat MILES.

Nay, now, you err, my God is safe in heaven;
His Father's glory is His shield and sword.
I could be glad I cannot be forgiven,
Because I cannot crucify my Lord.
Ten thousand kisses could not give Him pain.
Ay me! what blood is this? it flows again.
Yea, blood is flowing like a sea, I wis,
Through my dear Lady's picture out of His.

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL.

O knight, it is enough for thee to know
That He must always suffer in her woe;
For she is one with Him eternally,

But in a deeper, holier mystery,
Which thou shalt understand when thou shalt see,
He suffers much more bitterly than she ;
For shouldst thou stand to-day, and see Him stand,
Before God's throne, for thee, at God's right-hand,
Then all His wounds would bleed at sight of thee,—
Thee troubled by God's spotless majesty,—
Thee burning with sick shame and meek desire,
Until His healing blood should quench that fire.

Dicat MILES.

Oh, that a kiss could heal that wounded side,
And those dear limbs so often crucified ;
That I could wash this weak soul white again,
 Steeped in another's beauty many years ;
So that His blood will never cleanse the stain,
 Although I cannot see her now for tears.
I cannot see her, but she burns in me,
 And I should die if you put out that fire ;
Yea, shame it were if I alone go free,
 And let her writhe alone in stinging mire.

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL.

Dear brother, while you weep your hair grows grey,
And she would loathe thee, but she yearns to slay ;

For, seeing God, she grew to seem so fair
Unto herself, her own chief worshipper,
That earth's bright things seem dimness unto her.
But pity her who doth not pity thee ;
Yea, even for her sake arise and flee,
Because the furnace of God's purity,
Wherein must be her everlasting home,

Was heated sevenfold when ye first came here,
And other sevenfold when ye came from Rome ;

Wherefore, if ever yet ye held her dear,
Leave her, for if thou wilt not be forgiven,
It shall be heated seventy times and seven.

Dicat MILES.

O Raphael, if you could know, if you could see,
How her devouring image burns in me !

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL.

He knows, He sees, who uses her to wean
Thy spirit from all love but hers and His,
Till that consuming strife shall burn thee clean
From hers, who seems a part of what He is.

Dicat VENUS.

Beloved, by thine ancient nobleness,

And by the valiant deeds which thou hast done
Beneath the dim light of the earthly sun,
And by the memory of our long delights,
Meat of blithe days and slumbrous wine of nights ;
 And also by my meekly borne distress
When by another thou wert lured astray,
To tread with bleeding feet a barren way ;
 By all the gladness I have had of thee
Since first thou camest hither till this day,—
 Beloved, bid this monk depart from me,
For he must heed whatever thou wilt say.

Dicat MILES.

How can I ? for the blood would come again.
Love's sword is drawn ; if love will have me slain,
 Love's wounds are very sweet. I cannot fly.

*Tum Venus, hactenus amplexa militem, resolvat brachia,
 et prona in torum recidat, et dicat MILES.*

Kind saint, because I cannot go or stand,
Let me kneel here, and lean upon thy hand,—
 Kneel here, and try to rest before I die.

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL.

Yea, rest, and look upon the restful sky,

The balmy purple of the fragrant west,
The lowly-bending spray of wilding rose
That droops athwart the twilight, and the grass
Full of shut flowers where many glowworms pass,
And one sweet bird is singing in her nest
Unto her fledglings where the river flows.

Dicat MILES.

My lord, is this a shadow or a light
That I see flickering between day and night?

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL.

Brother, our God created Azrael,
When in the earthly garden Adam fell
And God's dear countenance grew terrible,
And set him with a keenly tender sword
To keep the ghostly garden of the Lord;
And because everywhere our God is Whole,
Who is the Root and Garden of the soul,
Therefore the sword is turnèd every way
Before the eyes of such as God will slay,
Being anointed with the fire of hell,
Which is God's love, that, burning night and
day,

Burns hard hearts black and broken hearts milk-
white,
That they may bathe rejoicing in God's light.
The sword draws nigh, thou wilt not turn away.

Dicat MILES ad Dominum.

I thank thee for the pain, though it is thine ;
I thank thee for the bliss, though it is mine.

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL ad Dominum.

Now hide, O God, this mountain out of sight,
And bind her also with a sleepy chain,
Lest she should wake before her time in pain.

Dicat VENUS.

Shall I have no more men to love again ?

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL ad Venerem.

He is the last of those whom thou hast slain.

Dicat VENUS.

Then leave me him, that I may deck and play
With his dead beauty till the judgment day.

Dicat SANCTUS RAPHAEL.

The Mighty hath not left him for a prey ;
But I will bear him hence to Christendom,
To that dear sepulchre where pilgrims come,
To sleep with other soldiers of the Cross,
Who conquered Satan in an easier fight,
And climbed God's holy hill a shorter way ;
For he shall walk on high with them in white,
On starry battlements of Syon's towers,
Where no one counts the scars of battle loss,
Whether they wounded him with swords or flowers.
For they rejoice not in themselves, but God,
Who stooped so low to lift them up so high, -
And bless continually His Staff and Rod,
Who gave them in their death the victory
Which makes the glory of God's house complete,
And wins for men a rarer crown than ours.
For this too is great victory, to tread
On the old dragon, though with hanging head,
Half-wistful eyes, and wounded loitering feet.

THE SOLDAN'S DAUGHTER.

I.

THE Soldan's daughter of Babylon
Went out to pluck her roses
Where scents are shed from an alley dun,
As starry even closes ;
As she passed out into the clear moonlight,
She saw on the sward a Christian knight.

The moon shone clear on his toilworn hands,
On his face unkempt and pale,
On the rusty links and the caitiff bands
Which he wore for knightly mail ;
But his brow was high, and his dreams seemed fair,
As the night wind lifted his yellow hair.

The Soldan's daughter dared not stay,
She was watched by too many eyes;
But she dropt a rose and a scroll to say,
"A word is enough for the wise."
And she came with the morning light alone
To hear the prisoner make his moan.

"Mahound be merciful to thee,
That thou mayest take our law,"
She said. "In sooth it pitied me
When all thy pain I saw;
My father would set thee in high estate,
And give thee a beautiful maid to mate."

Thereat he louted on knee full low,
Said, "Mary pity thee,
And give thee grace her Son to know,
For thy great courtesie."
She said, "I have found God very good,—
The river is parched when it leaves the wood."

He said, "The rivers flow into the sea,
And true hearts into Christendom;
Flee hence for the love of Christ with me."
She said, "For thy love I will come."

They loosed a boat on the river that night,
And floated adown the soft moonlight.

They had floated a mile among the reeds,
As he cooled his hand in the water,
When they heard behind them a tramp of steeds,
For the Soldan had missed his daughter.
He spurred out into the river amain,
He waved his spear to his panting train.

He laid on the boat a mailed hand,
The boat rocked to and fro,
Cried, "Caitiff and craven, turn and stand,
Thou shalt not carry it so ;
To steal a maid from her father's land."
She said, "I chose to go."
The Red-cross Knight leaned out of the boat,
He caught at the long white beard, and smote
With his gardening knife on the Soldan's throat ;

Said, "There is a miscreant gone to hell,
And now our love is free,
And you shall be baptized, and dwell
With me in Christentie."

The lady answered, "He loved me well,—
Is it all an evil dream?"
The charger started, the dead man fell,
He floated down the stream :
The knight rose softly and spread a sail,
And they floated on till the stars grew pale.

II.

They sailed by river, they sailed by sea,
And the knight was blithe of cheer,
As he saw the hills of Christentie
And the holy shrines appear ;
But the lady lay on his breast in pain,
Said, "I shall not see my garden again."

And now they have furled their sail at last,
And anchored in the bay ;
Then hand in hand to the church they passed
Of the nuns who walk in grey.
He said, "They will wash your spirit clean,
And then I can wed you, my own heart's queen."

"Oh, why are you shorn, lady abbess?" she said,
"And why do you walk in grey?"

And you are fair, yet you are not wed,—

Is your true knight far away ?”

“ We are wed to a Spouse Who dwells afar,
Who hath built us a bower in the Morning Star.”

“ And what is His name, lady abbess ?” she said ;

“ And why has He left you here ?

And why has He bidden you bow the head,

And made your life so drear ?”

“ We are God’s brides, Who died for us,
And till we die we serve Him thus.”

“ What a cruel God to use you so !

What a foolish God to die !—

Without dying He made the sweet flowers blow,

And the bright sun shine in the sky.”

“ But we are more than flower or sun,

Our life begins when theirs is done.”

“ But still you are little to God,” she said ;

“ And why need He die for you ?

He surely is mighty to raise the dead,

Without His dying too.”

“ He died to be wholly one with us,

So dying daily we serve Him thus.”

“And He died for all the world, you say ;
Did He die for my father and me ?
For I left my father far away,
Before I crossed the sea ;
My love smote sore, and my father is dead,
For he followed us close the night we fled.”

“Yes, He died for both,” the Abbess said,
“And His love will make you whole,
And remember to pray when you are wed,
And give alms for your father's soul,
That Mary's prayer and Jesus' grace
May lighten his spirit's dwelling-place.”

“And how did He woo you to be His bride,
What gifts did He give to you ?”
She caught her breath, and she blushed and sighed,
“I wish He would woo me too ;
I would pray for my father, and God would hear ;
He would surely answer His bride's first prayer.”

“He wooed me as He woos you now,
By my own heart's desire ;
He plaited thorns about my brow,
And set my heart on fire ;

But can you leave your own true knight,
Who brought you from darkness to God's good
light?"

Her true knight stood at the convent grate,
And he pressed her lily hand;
He said, "It is not yet too late,
She does not understand;
Leave her awhile alone with me."
The Abbess answered, "She is free."

He said, "Remember, you loved me well,
And how when I wooed you to flee;
You came not caring for heaven or hell,
Came not for Christ but me."
"That was very long ago," she said.
"My garden is withered, my father is dead."

"We sing full long, and we fast full late,
And our times of prayer are seven,"
The Abbess said, as she shut the grate.
"Would you shut me out of heaven?"
"Can you give yourself to be crucified
For a single kiss at your Husband's side?"

“ I do not know, but take me in,
He is all that is left me now.
I feel the blood from His hands begin
To tingle upon my brow.”
They took her in, and she bowed the head ;
In a year and a day her pure soul fled,
As she spake her marriage vow.

As she passed in, a novice peeped out
From under her veil of white,
And her blue eyes, as they roved about,
Met the eyes of the Red-cross Knight.
She said, “ It were merry to be with him ;”
He said, “ She is bright, the cloister dim.”

So the Red-cross Knight and the novice were wed,
And they sailed across the sea ;
And they sailed past the realm of Babylon,
And he set up his banner on Lebanon
To harry Soldanrie,
From a castle, where mass was never said,
Far beyond Christentie.

A PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY.

I SAID, All changes, nothing seems to grow,
As all the barren generations pass,
Each mirrored in the broken looking-glass,
Which is miscalled free reason here below
By erring men who glory in their shame,
But angels mock it by a fitter name.
Among them all there is no best or worst,
And yet the latter days condemn the first,
Also the former days rebuke the last ;
So there is feud of future and of past,
Each hating each, and neither knowing why.
Surely in this there is great vanity.

Then, as I railed at ease, one answering me
Said, Surely, as I think, thou dost not know

Whence all the ages come, or where they go ;
But I will tell thee this in imagery.

Some men and women sailed upon a sea,
The which is clear in calm but fathomless,
And full of spiritual bitterness,
And its one shore is very far away.
Now as they sailed clouds overcast the day,
And fierce storms buffeted their little bark,
So that they lost all hope to keep their way,
And chose to come to anchor in the dark ;
So out of their weak labouring craft they cast
Two anchors, whereof, wonderful to tell,
One mounted up to heaven, one sank to hell,
And one or other held the vessel fast.
Then, having herds and store of fruitful seed,
They set themselves to plant and rear their kine,
But nothing throve for long except a vine,
And that shot up a wonder and a sign ;
For if a leaf was torn it seemed to bleed,
And the grapes gave a bitter golden wine,
Whereof whoever drank was parched with pain,
And sickened with a thirst to drink again ;
But the vine's head was hidden up in heaven.

So as they could not live by husbandry,
Those mariners were fain to fish the sea,
And so lived on their life despondingly ;
Nor marked at first how their weak bark was riven,
And how the tide was rising in the hold
Until the first of them was growing old,
And felt the water cold about their feet.
Then gathering their young posterity,
They said, We shall sink here ingloriously
Nor follow in the wake of that fair fleet
Which came to anchor in the port of gold ;
For since that bitter storm we have not seen
The sun or any certain guiding star ;
And if we saw, we could not journey far
A sinking ship upon a stormy sea,
Where no land is, and sails are far between.
Therefore we pray you lay us orderly
Safe in the ship, lest we should float away ;
And stand yourselves on us when we are dead,
If so ye may prevail to keep your head
Above the waters till ye see the day.
Now on that sea the waters ebb and flow,
Not as the often-changing moon may draw,
But slowly, mightily, by some deep law,

Which none of those who sail thereon may know.
So as the orphans plied their pious toil,
They found the waters sunken very low,
And saw another thing exceeding strange,
A revelation of a searching change
Wrought by the bitter sea upon the dead ;
For every wrinkle, every paltry soil,
Of their hard life was wholly vanished,
And every face majestically clear ;
And yet there fell a horror and a fear
On those who gazed thereon, and knew not why :
And though there shone high pleasure in the eye
Of some, yet this was also hard to bear.
So standing on the dead they multiplied ;
But if it was the rising of the tide
Or sinking of the ship I shall not say,
But evermore the first forefathers lay
Deeper beneath the surging of the sea,
While over them the human masonry
Of other later dead rose high and wide,
Growing together in a mystery
About the anchor and the heavenly vine,
Drinking at their sad feasts its bitter wine,
Living and dying by the hungry sea.

Then as they multiplied their misery,
They often strove in their perplexity
Even to slaying, and the slain fell down
Into the waves, and lay where no one knew ;
And evermore, with over-mastering swell,
The tide rose where the thickest corpses fell,
And living lightnings wove an awful crown
Above the anchorage of that lorn crew,
And danced about the leaden waves, and drew
Strange figures in the halls of imagery,
Beneath the waters of captivity.
And the sea buried those who fell therein,
Or by old age, or by each other's sin ;
Not at their will who lived, nor yet by chance,
But blindly following the ordinance
Of whosoever rules the sea and land,
Which doubtless it were well to understand,
For then it might be that the fleshly shrine
Would grow up peaceably about the vine ;
But had it been His pleasure this should be,
Methinks He would not build upon the sea.
And but that I have fear to weary thee
With riddle, there is more that I could tell
Of many mysteries which there befell,

And now, even while I talk with thee, befall.
And how the mariners are fain to think
That it is not into the sea they sink,
Because they never see their ship at all,
But that beneath them somewhere is firm ground,
Though narrowing, threatening waters roar around.
And how oftentimes adventurous seekers sound
In chambers lying deep below, to see
The pearly cells and storied jewellery,
Which in the deeps where none can breathe abound;
And how a sudden rush of waves will go,
Drowning such seekers, surging from below;
And after this there is a long despair,
Lest the house grow more wide and not more fair.

But some think God is drawing silently,
While far beneath the bitter water moans,
Into the land where shall be no more sea,
Into the land whose sunshine is His face,
A holy house fashioned of living stones,
Where every one is fair in its own place.
But when I said, "Interpret this to me,"—
"Dost thou not know where God will bury thee?"
And all about me too was bitter sea.

QUEEN CRIMHILD'S ROSE-GARDEN.

SEVEN leagues long and seven leagues wide,
With cypresses on every side,
Is Queen Crimhild's rose-garden.

Seventy thousand knights, I wis,
Have died in vain to win one kiss
From the Queen of the rose-garden.

For the thorny forest is desolate
Beneath the shadow of evil fate,
Round the sunshiny rose-garden.

And when the perilous wood is past,
And they scent the balmy gales at last
That blow from the rose-garden,

Seventy fathoms both wide and deep
Is the river which they must cross in sleep,
Who seek the good rose-garden.

But as for those who would cross awake,
They are crushed midway by the black coiled snake
That swims round the rose-garden.

Queen Crimhild sits in her tower all day,
To watch the many knights astray,
Who seek her sweet rose-garden.

And she walks in her garden all the night,
To meet the few who have sought aright
The terrible rose-garden.

Wherever her unshod foot is set,
With blood of knights the grass is wet,
Who died in the rose-garden.

For a lion is couched under every rose,
And serpents feed on the dew that flows
From the leaves of the rose-garden.

Who cross must kiss Crimhild that night,
Or be stricken blind when the morning light
Breaks over the rose-garden.

And then they wander day by day,
Till they are taken for a prey
By the beasts of the rose-garden.

While they live they care for no earthly thing,
But only to hear their lady sing
Down the walks of the rose-garden ;

Where the nightingales warble night and day,
And these be their true-loves' souls, who pray
For the knights of the rose-garden.

But what wind carries the sleeping knights
To the marriage of manifold delights
In the mystical rose-garden,

And how they meet their Queen ere day,
None have seen, and all can say,
Who know not the rose-garden.

GAWAIN AND THE LADY OF AVALON.

CAME tidings unto Caerleon,
Where Arthur kept Shrovetide,
How, far away in Avalon,
A scaly dragon's pride,
With visage like a woman's, wan,
Wasted the country-side.

Arthur let cry through all his land,
"Who curses me for wrong?"
Then flowed there in on every hand
The stream of loyal song,
' If right could make a king's throne stand,
Then Arthur's would stand long."

When Arthur's praise was duly sung,
A way-worn maiden came,

And said, with duteous faltering tongue,
 “Ye are not much to blame,
My liege, for we were very young,
 Though ye forgot our game.

“We played at guessing thoughts,” she said.
 “Ye did not guess aright.
Ye sware to give me one to wed,
 To be my lord and knight.
Now twenty years, methinks, are fled,
 And ye forget our plight.”

The dew was on her raven hair
 And her blue glistening eye ;
No dust on foot or ankle bare,
 Though all the land was dry ;
And every knight was ready there
 To wed with her or die.

“But I,” she said, “am dowerless,
 And comfortless of men,
And sojourn in the wilderness,
 And in the dragon’s den.”
Pale looks were plentiful, I guess,
 About the Table then.

Lancelot looked in her pleading face,
And sighed, "If I were free;"
Quoth Tristram as he left the place,
"His answer serves for me."
Galahad said something of God's grace;
She said, "I choose not thee."

Geraint bowed over Enid's veil;
His visage was more white.
Lamorack buckled up his mail,
And looked into the night.
Gawain, whose face was always pale,
Seemed ruddy in the light.

She laid her little hand in his,
He chose to let it stay;
She put her rosy cheek to his,
He did not turn away;
She put her cherry lips to his,
Which were as dim as clay.

He spake, as soon as it was time,
Of pleasant ways of love,
That rules the sweetly-ordered chime
Of stars and saints above,

And bade the minstrels sing the rhyme
Of the true turtle-dove ;

And bade them call the holy priest
To knit the twain in one.
She said, " I keep my marriage-feast
Not here, at Avalon."
None knew why all men as she ceased
Trembled in Caerleon.

" Where shall we find a priest to wait
And bless the marriage-bed ?
And if your house be desolate,
How shall your guests be fed ?
And who will guide them to our gate ?"
The courteous bridegroom said.

" The dragon's scales of woven glass
Will light my banquet well ;
Iscariot will sing the mass,
And Pilate toll the bell ;
And all my marriage guests will pass
Over the mouth of hell.

“ I go to the great wilderness,
And to the dragon’s lair,
Where the great hills are harbourless,
And the sharp rocks are bare ;
And if thou pity my distress,
Then thou wilt meet me there.

“ But sit thou with thy master here
For three days yet,” saith she ;
“ Then shalt thou ride in desert drear,
Three days alone to me ;
The seventh day with lordly cheer
Our marriage-feast shall be.”

She kissed Sir Gawain on the mouth,
He kissed her on the hand ;
Then she departed to the south,
Between the sea and sand,
Leaving behind a bitter drouth
In all King Arthur’s land.

Thereat the King was full of woe,
The princes of dismay.
A bolder man had feared to go,
But Gawain feared to stay,

And parted in a storm of snow,
Alone, on the third day.

The seventh day, by Grammarie,
And by the dragon's power,
He saw beside a leaden sea
A rosy granite tower,
That fronted to a sunny lea,
Blood-red with wild windflower.

Thereon went many quick and dead,
And some who do not die;
Each wore a garland on the head,
Each laughed within the eye.
No flower was bent beneath their tread,
No dewy leaf brushed dry.

They passed within the granite gate,
And there was room for all;
Gawain could see his lady wait,
In green and purple pall.
As he lit down, the cloud of fate
Went up from Arthur's hall.

Beneath Gawain his feet seemed lame,
He stumbled and he fell ;
There lived for him a subtle flame
In every crushed wind-bell.
She said, " No marvel, for ye came
Over the mouth of hell."

He saw an altar to the west,
He saw the incense sink,
And in the bag on the priest's breast
He heard the silver chink.
One stood to serve in purple vest,
Whose hands were washed in ink.

Black serpents round the altar ran,
But Judas chanted well,
And sweetly rang his sacristan
The silver sacring bell ;
And so the marriage rite began,
Over the pit of hell.

Sweet gusts of music from below
Lifted the lady's veil ;
Soft sudden flakes of rosy snow
Flecked the black serpent's mail.

'Mid happy faces all aglow
The bridegroom's face was pale.

The altar sank beneath the floor,
Arose the marriage feast,
Sweeter and merrier and more
The melody increased ;
None started as grim graveworms tore
The sacristan and priest.

In shifting many-coloured light,
Too bright to look upon,
You saw the guests, you saw the knight,
Where that wild radiance shone ;
You did not see the lady bright
Who reigns in Avalon.

Yet all, as though beneath her eye,
Were busy to rejoice ;
And now the music mounted high
To glorify her choice,
Who felt the dragon sliding by,
And heard the lady's voice.

A moment not a guest was seen
Within the marriage room ;
A moment, and the magic sheen
Faded in magic gloom,
Through which, half seen, the fairy queen
Scattered a sweet perfume.

Gawain bent low for courtesie,
And thanked her for her grace ;
He laid his hand upon her knee
And looked into her face,
And wondered if he did not see
The dragon in her place.

The lady his weak hand hath ta'en,
And bidden him be of cheer ;
He asked her, " Is the dragon slain ? "
She said, " He is not here.
The dragon will not waste again
In Arthur's golden year."

Arose a happy fairy sound,
As of a little well
By the first break of spring unbound ;
Cool flowers began to swell

From underneath the burning ground,
To veil the mouth of hell.

The moon above the misty lea
Hung like a globe of fire,
Whereby Gawain a hag might see
In ghastly gay attire,
Whose wrinkled face flushed horribly
With jubilant desire.

He knew her, for she held the hand
He gave to one more fair ;
He knew her by the magic band
His lady used to wear,
With jewels from an unknown land
Bound in her raven hair.

Fondly she lisped, " My honey knight,
It needs not to rehearse
Wherefore I lifted up the blight,
And took away the curse,
Because ye took me in God's sight
For better and for worse.

“Though thou be very fair to see,
And I a loathly crone,
Yet what is that to thee and me
Before King Arthur’s throne?
And when I hunger after thee,
I hunger for mine own.”

Gawain, the knight of courtesie,
Bowed down his stately head,
And said, “Sweet wife, most certainly
We in God’s sight are wed,”
As he drew back the canopy
Over the bridal bed.

Full still he lay till break of day
In counterfeited bliss,
Nor turned his loyal cheek away
From any loathly kiss,
And saw the while the lightnings play,
And heard her serpents hiss.

There lay beside Gawain at morn
A maiden undefiled,
As rosy as the blooming thorn
When eves in May are mild;

As tender as the babe unborn,
To life scarce reconciled.

Her brow was veiled with woven brass,
And bonds were on the hands,
Which held an emerald hourglass
Wherein few golden sands ;
Her feet seemed quivering to pass
Into untravelled lands.

She kissed her husband thick and fast
On lip and brow and cheek,
Her captive arms round him she cast,
And then she tried to speak,
Until the love came out at last,
Although the voice was weak.

“ Wilt have by day a lovely may,
By night a loathly crone,
That other men may see and say,
His bride becomes a throne ;
Or have me foul for them by day,
And fair for thee alone ? ”

He thought, "Whate'er my choice may be,
I cannot choose but ill,
For she by slight of Grammarie
Would fool my simple skill."
He said, "This is too hard for me,
Use your own gentle will."

Oh, sweetly smiled the lady then,
And sweetly laughed the lea,
Sweet roses veiled the dragon's den ;
"Henceforth my face shall be
Fair when I will for other men,
And all day long for thee !"

She laughed, "'Tis well ye did not play
When Arthur lost the game,
For you have guessed aright to-day
The wish of every dame."
"Yet," said Gawain, "I cannot say
My lady's lovesome name."

The colours of the dragon's mail
Flashed in the dewy grass ;
The lady's face flushed red and pale,
"And I had hoped, alas !

That thou shouldst rend the brazen veil,
And loose the bonds of glass.

“ Ah ! woe is me, it may not be,
And I have loved thee so ;
But henceforth thou shalt never see
My footprints where I go,
To wake the flowers upon the lea,
And kiss away the snow.”

He smiled farewell, her colour rose ;
She cried aloud, “ For shame !
I sojourn seven years with those
Who do not ask my name.
Hence with thee and thy painted shows ;
Hence by the road ye came !

“ Go home and boast in Caerleon,
Below thy courtly breath,
About the bonny bride ye won,
For whom hell hungereth !
But come no more to Avalon,
For that will be thy death.”

Low fell the veil of woven brass,
On heavy eyelids bound ;
On folded hands the bonds of glass
Clanked softly without sound ;
And so Gawain beheld her pass
Over the dewy ground.

ART AND DEATH.

A STATELY lady's broidered hem
Swept softly through the flowers of May,
An aged shadow passed on them
And smote the flowers with pale decay,
But in the lady's diadem
It did not dim one jewel's ray.

The lady did not seem to care
To watch her flowers ordained to fade,
Although their dying hues were fair,
Their perfume sweeter in the shade ;
But followed with a steadfast air
The shadow to a sunless glade.

The shadow seemed a hoary man,
Bent down beneath forgotten sin ;

It was a ghastly sight to scan
His blinking eyes and shrivelled skin,
To count the graveworms as they ran
Like drops of sweat from brow to chin.

The lady's golden hair flowed free
From underneath her jewelled crown ;
Her eyes were bright as eyes can be,
But looking neither up nor down ;
She asked the shadow for a key,
And then the shadow seemed to frown.

The lady took him by the hand,
The lady kissed him on the mouth ;
And, as a frozen, thirsty land
Drinks the dank kisses of the south,
That shadowy shape of slimy sand
Slaked at warm lips his icy drouth.

The shadow seemed to change and grow
Beneath the lady's steadfast look,
Nor eye might see nor tongue might show
How many shapes and hues it took,
Until the lady in its glow
Saw more than all which she forsook.

For though it was a barren glade,
Where never yet the sun would rise,
Yet in the solitude he made,
The shadow being very wise,
Saw all the flowers he doomed to fade
And all the garden in her eyes.

And now the shadow was a fire,
Blown brighter as the lady sighed,
And in that furnace of desire
Nought but the fairest might abide ;
Her flowers upon that funeral pyre
Were changed in him and glorified.

The lady's visage did not change,
She kept her state of tender grace,
Her earnest aspect did not range
Beyond the radiant shadow's face ;
She was so still, 'twas very strange
To watch her fading in her place.

The shadow sucked away the light
From jewelled crown and golden head,
It changed her garments deadly white,
Which had been green and blue and red ;

The shadow was so strong to blight,
Because the shadow had been dead.

The shadow's love was burning her
To soft grey ashes, and you knew
That any light which lingered there
Was only where the heat shone through,
And what still seemed so shapely fair
Would crumble if a light wind blew.

Then, as the lady grew more weak,
She nestled to the shadow's side,
And caught the key and tried to speak,
But, sweetly stammering, only tried ;
Then, stooping down to kiss her cheek,
The shadow lived, the lady died.

IN THE JACQUERIE.

ANSTICE and Amalie, watching late,
Sate over Sir Raoul's castle-gate,
And saw the rabble foam up in hate :
Raoul would fight and Amalie fly,
But Anstice sate quietly waiting to die.

Raoul was beaten down to his knee,
They tore from his girdle the silver key
Of the postern where Amalie meant to flee ;
He cast to the tower a warning cry
Where Anstice sate quietly waiting to die.

They bound his hands and they bound his feet,
They left him his shirt for winding-sheet,
They hung up Sir Raoul against the sky ;
But Anstice sat quietly waiting to die.

Amalie covered her golden head,
Hid her face from the noble dead ;
But, looking out with a tearless eye,
Anstice sate quietly waiting to die.

Amalie slunk through the gate to flee,
She stumbled over the caitiff's knee
Who had taken Sir Raoul's silver key :
She swooned to earth and no help was nigh ;
But Anstice sate quietly waiting to die.

The rabble sate drinking the wine and mead,
And Amalie served them in beggar's weed ;
But she cast up a torch to avenge her shame,
And the roof fell down on their heads in flame,
And the beams of the tower fell down from high
Where Anstice sate quietly waiting to die.

The tower lies sunk in the castle moat,
And the cushat warbles her one clear note
In the elms that grow into the brooding sky,
Where Anstice sate long ago waiting to die.

METTELILL.

IN a great hall of Burgundy, on a November day,
A lady with her daughters sat clothed in rich
array;
Without the woods were yellow, above the sky was
grey.

The mother sat a-spinning in purple on the right,
Upon the left Thorfrida in scarlet trimmed the light,
And in the midmost Mettelill sat singing, clothed
in white.

The housecarles brought a stranger in, whom they
found wandering

Upon her lands without her leave, who said he was
a king,
And when they asked what he could do, he said
that he could sing.

With hanging head and dragging feet he passed
into the hall ;
He leant upon the housecarles' hands as one at
point to fall ;
His hands were soft, his head was crowned, he
seemed unlike a thrall.

But when they asked him of his sire, he had no
word to say,
And when they asked him of his state, and where
his kingdom lay,
He said he could not tell the road, for it was far
away.

They questioned him why he was there, he did not
answer why ;
The lady took him by the hand, he would not meet
her eye ;
The lady's brethren glared on him, and cursed him
for a spy.

He answered that it was not so, but still he hung
his head ;

The lady dropped his hand in haste, again her
spindle sped ;

Thorfrida looked on Mettelill, and not a word they
said.

Then all the lady's brethren laid hand to hilt amain ;
They said, " For his own liberty a king should be
full fain

To battle with his enemies till they or he were
slain."

He said, " I have not done you wrong, why should
ye choose to fight ?"

They answered, " Fight or be a slave, nor shame
the arms of knight."

" I am weak," he said, " and weary, and I will
yield my right."

He knelt before the lady, she took away his crown ;
Thorfrida brought the scissors to shear his locks of
brown ;

On the soft cheeks of Mettelill the silent tears ran
down.

The lady bade them bring a harp, that her new
thrall might sing ;
He sang the song of Calvary, from this world's
fashioning
Until the Hebrews crucified their own anointed
King.

His lady in his singing sat still and held her breath ;
Thorfrida looked as one lovesick, whom no love
answereth ;
Between their feet may Mettelill sank down as pale
as death.

Next morning little Mettelill came to him timidly,
“ I pray you as you are a king, out of your courtesy,
Because its half-words haunt me so, to teach your
song to me.”

He bade her come at twilight, when the chill sky
is clear,
Just before the shroud of darkness falls on the dying
year,
Beneath the shuddering pine-forest his holy song
to hear.

Upon her heels Thorfrida came, with jewels in her
hand,
And bade him flee away with her to his own realm
and land,
She said she could not bear a king should be at
churls' command.

But he had promised Mettelill to teach her min-
strel lore,
And also to her mother he would keep the oath he
swore ;
Thorfrida answered angrily, " So *she* was here be-
fore !"

Beneath the shuddering pine-forest the thrall and
Mettelill
Met, and he taught her all his song ; they had no
thought of ill,
Nor started when her uncle's hunt came sweeping
round the hill.

Her uncles said, " Woe worth the hour when this
false stranger came

To beguile our sister's daughter into the paths of
shame ;
For her a fitter bridal, for him a death of flame."

Mettelill answered lowly, in the clear eventide,
" He wooed me not, and no man shall have me for
his bride,
For I will give my maidenhood unto the Crucified."

Her uncles said, " Your mother will judge her thrall
and you ;"
Then Mettelill made answer of what she little knew,
" And she will judge him innocent, for I have
spoken true."

They brought them to her mother, hustled in a
shouting throng ;
Her mother listened patiently, and then she pondered long,
And then she lifted up her head, " I never liked
that song.

" But yet because your blood might be a curse
upon my head,

You shall be sold, and Mettelill to-morrow shall be
wed,
And I will make her bridal feast and deck her
bridal bed."

Mettelill answered boldly, "I will not be a bride,
My maidenhood is dedicate unto the Crucified ;"
The thrall said, "She shall wed with me, or wed
with none beside."

Mettelill trembled greatly to hear the minstrel's
word,
Her mother's brow was darkened for anger as she
heard,
Thorfrida whispered something behind her uncle's
beard.

The uncle whom she whispered said, "Let the
thrall go free,
He is bewitched by Mettelill with shameful sorcery,
But we will take and hang her upon a barren tree."

The thrall has taken sword and shield to fight for
Mettelill,

The uncles fled before his face, for they had little
will

To stand to one who never struck, except he struck
to kill.

They marvelled at his prowess; he said, "I only
fight

To free my well-belovèd, and not for my own
right."

Then with a hair of Mettelill they bound him in
her sight.

Thorfrida answered craftily, "The old law is the
best :

Bring hither sword and distaff to put her to the
test ;

If she will slay the carrion-kite that stole into her
nest."

Thinking, "If she shall pity him, then she will be
a slave ;

To slay her love will make her mad, while he in
his green grave

Will rest from shame and slavery among the free
and brave."

The minstrel spake to Mettelill, "It will be an easy
death

To stoop upon thy lily hand and kiss away my
breath,

While through my heart that aches and burns, the
cool sword shivereth.

"For now I pine with longing to have thee for my
bride,

And shame it were to woo thee to bondage at my
side,

Even if I could win thee from Him the Crucified."

In fear and trembling Mettelill knelt down and
spake in hall,

"Why put his blood upon me? how should I love
a thrall?

Nay, let him go for my sake, I love him not at all."

She looked upon her mother, who half melted at
her prayer ;

She looked upon her sister, and found no comfort
there ;

She looked upon the minstrel, and she thought him
very fair.

Her mother's brethren answered, "There is no law
but one."

Thorfrida lisped, "Our Mettelill would make a
sorry nun."

With pale white lips, her mother said, "Let what
is law be done."

She came before her mother, and knelt meekly at
her knee ;

She said, "Now I am in great straits, and have no
help but thee,

My mother, and thou barest me, I pray thee choose
for me."

Her mother took her in her arms, and kissed her
on the cheek,

And so, while one might tell a score, held her, and
did not speak ;

At last a fitful stream found way, of broken words
and weak :

"And if the thrall is innocent, his blood is on your
head ;

And if you live in bondage, far better you were
dead;

And if you had never seen him, right nobly you
had wed."

She rose and took the distaff (Thorfrida's heart was
riven),

And then she said, "Dear mother, take back what
you have given;

May you and they reign long on earth, and he and
I in heaven."

They took away her rich array, and shorn her yel-
low hair,

They clothed her in coarse russet, such as serving-
women wear;

The minstrel looked upon her, and thought her
very fair.

She went up to him boldly, and she kissed him to
their face,

For she said, "He is my brother, for we are in evil
case;"

But they said, "She once was maidenly, but now
she hath no grace."

He put his hands about her, and he laid her to his
 breast,
And she sank down very sisterly, and very full of
 rest,
As a little bird with broken wing sinks down upon
 the nest.

Thorfrida said, "They think to live as their own
 hearts incline,
And hold sweet dalliance over sweet music and
 sweet wine ;
But drive them forth unto the sty, and let them
 feed the swine."

Mettelill sobbed a little for her sister's cruelty,
But he held her closer, whispering, "It is for jea-
 lousy,
For she is afraid of bondage, and is hungry after
 me."

He bore her to the swineherd's hut, as in his arms
 she lay ;

An old wife walked behind them, weeping, to show
the way
From the hall of many banners across the sodden
clay.

Mettelill fed the swine with him, but only for that
night,
For the thralls about the swineherd's hut were
waked by a great light,
Wherein the king and Mettelill passed out beyond
their sight.

The light was seen at midnight, but at the dawn of
day
They saw where little Mettelill lay cold on bed of
clay,
But they did not see the footprints where the other
went away.

THE TROADES.

CASSANDRA, Helen, and Andromache
Sate all together by a burning sea ;
A chilly thundercloud hung over them ;
They were to sail into captivity.
Each knew that each must taste of slavery,
Though one was still to wear a diadem.

Andromache spake calmly in her scorn,
“ I wonder to what purpose I was born,
For now I have no holy work to do,
But only to be Pyrrhus’ paramour,
And bear his child, who slew the child I bore,
Yet I have lived in honour hitherto :

“ Therefore I will be desolately free
From the dear yoke of Hector’s memory,

To strive for what low prize is yet to win ;
Because I think that heaven hath no delight
That mortal men and women cherish right,
 Seeing that God hath shut me up to sin.”
And as she spake, the cloud grew overhead,
Changing his purple to an angrier red,
 And hungry crests of waves came curling in.

Then Helen, full of shame and kindly fear,
Sobbed out, “ O father Zeus, I pray thee hear,
 Though thou hast made me only fair, not strong,
Nor holy, as these other women were
Who have a harder lot than I to bear,
 Who am the foster-mother of their wrong.”

Then, as the utter blackness left the sky,
She lifted up her carolling voice on high,
 And said, “ Let us make merry while we may,
We know not good or evil, false or true,
But know that earth is green, and heaven is blue,
 And in our hair there is more gold than grey.

“ I wish I might have only loved one love,
But it was ordered otherwise above,

And after all there is not much to say.
I like to stroke my husband's yellow hair,
Though Dardan Paris was more princely fair ;
But starry night comes after cloudy day."

Now all this while Cassandra nothing said,
But on thin quivering hands she propped her head,
Bowling, but not as those who bow in woe,
Looking beneath her eyebrows eagerly
At some fair thing which others could not see,
And when she spake her words were hoarse and
low,

In a sweet kind of husky undertone,
As of one speaking to herself alone,
After long weary crying to deaf ears.
And thus she spake, "I owe great laud to thee
For drawing nigh at last to visit me,
After my widowhood of many years.

"This was my comfort, when with wanton hands
Slight Aias wrenched away my temple bands,
Seeking to see what thou hadst never seen,
Because I knew that Death was nigh to me
And unto him, and also that to thee
I come the dearer that I come not clean.

“Being defiled, I have the greater need
Of thee, by whom I shall be cleansed and freed.

In love the mighty gods have made us weak,
That we may lean upon them as we go
Into the dark with faltering steps and slow,

Where soft-veiled shadows play at hide and seek,
And silent ministering rivers flow
Above the happy orchard grounds, where grow
The holy fruits that ripen for the meek.

“The time has gone by now to mock at me,
So I shall voyage at ease across the sea,

And watch the ripples dance, not fearing thrall,
Measuring the sunny journey with glad eye
To that clear palace where I have to die,
Not blindly, as a fatted ox at stall.

“Andromache shall see a second spring,
And be the wife and mother of a king.

Helen shall cherish her Hermione,
And see her gracious golden husband fade,
And fade herself into a pearly shade ;

And surely both of them will pity me.
Let them, for pity lightens heavy care ;

They fancy death is something hard to bear,
But we know better, O Polyxene !

“Wherefore I will not show thy gifts again
By erring speech to misconceiving men
Until the end, and O Apollo ! then !”

ABELARD AND HELOISE.

A BROKEN lamp half choked by mouldy gloom,
A broken woman in a broken room,
Where all was cold without and cold within;
A broken woman who had once been fair,
With tattered bents of broken golden hair
Dangling about a visage ashy pale,—
The paler from the shadow of the veil,
Which, drooping low in many a rusty fold,
Made the lithe shape and supple stature old.
Her quivering hand scarce propped a quivering
chin,
And on two rings that peered beyond the shade
The light shone faintly; and the night wind
strayed
Faintly about the broken window bars,
Where low mist hung that curtained out the stars.

Anon a call upon the cloudy air,
And then a footstep on the narrow stair ;
A step, a voice, and she sat dreaming there.
The step was nearer, and the voice more loud ;
She shivered blindly, but her head was bowed
Beneath a tangled burden of despair,
And still the door was shut and he was come.
She felt his hand put back her tangled hair ;
She felt his eager lips, and still was dumb,—
Dumb with dismay that chilled her glad surprise.
At last she gasped and lifted up her head,
And looked at him with wide and open eyes.

Then with a fluttering, tremulous voice, she said,
“ Master, belovèd, are you quick or dead ? ”
“ I do not think to have to die again.”
“ Oh, master, then I have to die alone ;
But you will pray for me at God’s high throne.”
“ Love, you are nearer to God’s throne than I,
But I will pray for you, and pray for me.”
“ And, master, are you judged and are you sped ?
Well, for heaven’s light is beaming in your eye.”
“ My darling, do not be afraid to die.
God is so gentle, so unlike his saints ;
For when they lay their hands upon our taints,

They probe, they brand ; His kisses burn away."

" I knew God could not be on Bernard's side ;

But when Citeaux shall be a satyr's den,

And harmless thorns shall choke Clairvaulx again,

And no hard rule lie heavy upon men,

God in your glory will be glorified."

" Sweet, are you sure God will not be denied ?

And I, if there be mention of me then,

Be loudly praised and timorously cursed

As the bold man ' who dared deny the first,

Though why he did not clearly understand,

He made the quibble serve that came to hand ?

" I have not been to heaven, I do not fear."

" Sweet, I should pity, but I shall not hear ;

But talk of happier things, and not of me."

" Then tell me, master, if the company

Of righteous ransomed by the Only Son,

Or of the angels erst by pride undone,

Be more ?"—" I counted not ; the saints are one."

" Have angels wings to fly from place to place,

Or do they journey by a ghostly grace ?"

" They do not journey, but are very still,

Their only place and country is God's will ;

And as He wills they serve Him here and there,

Yet rest in Him, for He is everywhere."

“And tell me, up in heaven do they say
The Paternoster yours or Bernard’s way?”
“They do not pray in Latin or in Greek.”
“In Hebrew, then?”—“They love and do not
 speak;
They have no lips, but with their love they pray.”
“You speak?”—“For I am fleshier than they.”
“Ah, you are dead, and still I drag you down,
And you have given me immortality
Here upon earth; and you instructed me
To climb with you the narrow way to heaven.
And I have laboured so to be forgiven,
If ever I might be pure, and be your crown.”
“O sister, wedded to a worthier Spouse;
O flower, bruised by the thorns that gird His brows;
O flower, too fair to make a crown for me,
And yet I have no other crown but you;
For oh, my sister, till the judgment day,
As I must count the years that roll away,
And bring no work and teach me nothing new,
I think to have no pleasure but our love,
Which was the first sin I repented of;
And I shall have no other pain but this,
To think how heartless was the parting kiss

I put upon your aching forehead then,
Which I must never, never kiss again.
For, O my spirit's sister, had you seen
What love, our love though sinful might have been,
What your love was and is, mine cannot be,
Then you would be content ; and you shall see."

She heard and yet she would not be content,
But cried to God and said, " My punishment
And also his is more than I can bear ;
For we have sought and striven with pain to pay
Thy mercy, which I find not anywhere ;
And yet Thou wilt not put our sin away.
Weary at heart am I of Thee, O Lord,
Because Thou wilt not put our sin away ;
But we have laboured, and have no reward.
Thou, even Thou, hast shut us up in night,
And for my sin his spirit hath been bowed,
And all the courage, which was full of light,
Is covered up with a desponding cloud
Of helpless, self-accusing lowliness."

The spirit almost smiled at her distress.
She heeded not, " For now," she said, " his name,
Which should have been my glory, is my shame ;
For certainly it is decreed above

That he should be forgotten for my love.”
“Not so,” he said, “O sorely tried, not so,
But all the masters famous heretofore
Until I came, and all our noisy lore
Should all have been forgotten but for me ;
And I forgotten also but for thee,
Whom by my sin I brought exceeding low.
Wherefore thy love shall be a parable
Among the generations evermore,
When they shall ask what made you love so well,
Or what you found in me to make you proud.”
“So I have loved you, and you were a dream,
And you loved knowledge, and it was a lie ;
Now were it better to lie down and die,
Or strive to think that things are as they seem
Once more?”

“If envy could have place on high,
Angels would envy you your penitence,
As you are jealous of their innocence.
I almost think that they would envy me.
They cannot taste the joy without a name,
Our joy, to wear throughout eternity
The comfortable garment of our shame,
Drawn round us very softly out of sight,
And covered up with charitable light.

The happiness of having been forgiven
Is worth ten thousand thousand years of heaven.
The brightest seraph might forswear his crown
To lie, and tremble, and to be cast down,
And fall, and fall, and fall, and find God there,
And find Him still too beautiful to bear."

"I count the seraph happier who can soar
Through heavens and heavens, and see God always
higher."

"You will not : you will see the Bridegroom's face
Shining more sweetly from the lower place,
And each is judged after his own desire ;
For even the lake of everlasting fire
Seems sweeter to the lost than to adore.
But you, if you could stretch your wasted hand
Into the night, and pluck the evening star
From heaven"—

"Then doubtless I should understand
The glory wherewith God doth glorify
His saints, whom He hath set with Him on high,
And strewn the stars like dust beneath their feet.
Why this bare penance-room should overflow
With throbbing splendour, yet I hardly know,
It is such a pleasant pain to be below,

Quite out of reach, and yearn and sigh ‘too far.’”

“So also I rejoice in what I miss,

Only my yearning hath not any pain ;

I count my losses, and they turn to gain.

The voice which says ‘too late’ is very sweet,

And God is glorified in even this.”

“But this is hard for flesh and blood to bear.”

“Think, sister, that the light of every star

Is in you, whether it be near or far ;

Then you shall understand and be content,

And all things shall be with you where you are,

Because it is not any banishment

To be with Jesus, who is everywhere.”

“Yea, master, I am well content.”

“Farewell.”

“Tarry a little for the matin bell,

And pray with her whom you have taught to
pray

This last, once more, on earth.”

“I may not stay ;

I may not come upon the holy place.”

She turned to front him with a quivering face :

“The night is keen, and whither will you go ?”

“My sister, to the only house I know,

The house we both know well, a house of clay,
A house of worms, a house of clammy sod,
Where I will keep my vigil as I may ;
You know I cannot go away from God.”
“ Yea, even there it shall be well with you,
Beloved master, only take me too.”
“ Sister, not yet, you need not ever come.
What would you with me in the empty gloom ?”
Again she answered with a little moan,
“ Oh, master, take me in if there is room,
And I will tell you news of Christendom.”
“ Sister, it is too much to leave your throne,
To show God’s glory with your eyes to me,
For I shall still be blind, but you will see,
To sit down with me in the dark alone,—
Alone with me. I am not company
For you or any saint, only for God.”

LADYBIRD'S WOOING.

LADYBIRD began to say,
"When my beauty shall decay,
Let me sit in rich array,
Though a throne be stuffed with care,
Roses for the golden hair,
Thorns but jewels also for the grey."

Sing Love has been a rover,
But his holidays are over;
Where shall he go to school?

Far and wide the princes heard
The complaint of Ladybird,
And the heart of them was stirred

To seek treasures of renown,
And a newer, brighter crown
For her brow, according to her word.

Sing Love has been a rover.

They were scattered like the foam,
And three only brought gifts home ;
One a laurel wreath from Rome,
One a golden harp from Greece,
One from Ind a cup of peace,
To her palace of the pearly dome.

Sing Love has been a rover.

Ladybird, still fancy-free,
Made a feast unto the three,
In her city by the sea,
And said, "Who will cleanse my eye
With the fire of Sinai ?
He shall cast his mantle over me."

Sing Love has been a rover.

Only one of three was bold,
Nor hath any minstrel told
How he bought what is not sold ;

How he bare that living light,
To renew her fading sight
When both he and Ladybird were old.

Sing Love has been a rover.

“Oh, my love, will this suffice?”
“Though I burn and you are ice,
You have bought me with a price;
Will you have me wed you now,
Or for pity cool my brow
With one lily out of Paradise?”

Sing Love has been a rover.

Then he saw her great distress,
And he was not pitiless,
Only in the last caress
He said sadly, “If I wait,
Still I leave thee desolate.”
So he went alone in bitterness.

Sing Love has been a rover.

And the angels of the west
Wove the lilies of sweet rest
For a guerdon of his quest;

But his arms were very cold,
And they both were very old,
When she leapt to peace upon his breast.

Sing Love has been a rover,
But his holidays are over.
Love shall go to school with Death.

“IL NE FAUT PAS JOUER AVEC
L'AMOUR.”

A ROSY maiden playing,
Alone and fancy-free,
Met Baby Love a-maying,
Under a Judas tree.

Love said, “It is not merry
For maids to play alone;
Come play with me bob-cherry.”
She thought the baby grown.

She played with him an hour,
Till both their lips were red;
And then Love plucked a flower,
And put it on her head.

It grew and wound around her,
As she went on with Love.
Love drew it close and bound her ;
She took no heed thereof.

The flowers which bound the maiden
Slipped to a young man's hand,
As she sank down overladen
With Love in a strange land.

Quoth she, " Can you discover
And bring my lord to me ?"
" Ere midnight strike, your lover
Shall kneel to you," quoth he.

" Remember when you find him
To bind him lest he rise."
Love said, " I cannot bind him ;
But I will bind your eyes."

LOVE'S VOTARY.

OTHERS have pleasantness and praise,
And wealth ; and hand and glove
They walk with worship all their days,
But I have only Love.

And therefore if Love be a fire,
Then he shall burn me up ;
If Love be water out of mire,
Then I will be the cup.

If Love come worn with wayfaring,
My breast shall be his bed ;
If he come faint and hungering,
My heart shall be his bread.

If Love delight in vassalage,
Then I will be his thrall,
Till, when I end my pilgrimage,
Love give me all for all.

A REVERIE.

WHEN the sun is in the west,
And the robin in the nest,
And most mothers are at tea,
With their cronies gossiping,
Autumn winds hold jubilee
Round a castle by the sea.
Household angels spread a cloak,
Woven of a ghostly spray,
Woven of thin lilac smoke,
Where the comfortable town,
Nestles under the bare down ;
Where the grass is turned to grey,
In the twilight's glimmering ;

But the light clouds overhead
Keep a little flush of red,
And you tingle in the glow
Of the sunset far away,
Where the pale blue, clear and cold,
Melts through green to dusky gold ;
And the stars begin to shine
Over the chill misty line,
Which you see begin to grow,
Marching slowly, steadily,
From the east and from the sea,
Heavy with the breath of ghosts,
Footmen in their silent hosts,
Horsemen riding on the wind,
But their mail is left behind ;
For they do not come to fight
In the awful lists of night,
But to find what each hath lost,
When they kept those towers of old,—
Some one deed they might have done,
Some one word they might have spoken,
When they walked beneath the sun,
For the which their rest is broken,
And they cannot quit its cost,

Giving gems and fairy gold
Till they find the mystic token ;
Then they enter into rest,
Far below the rosy west.
But and if they do not find,
Then a bitter biting wind
Chases them before the moon,
Deep into the heart of earth,
To the house of Death and Birth,
Where they watch till afternoon ;
And the dew upon the grass,
Which is seen of such as pass
Early in the holy morn,
Is the remnant of their tears,
Who have wandered many years,
Seeking there and finding not
What they gladly would forget.
If a lady shed a tear,
There is born a violet,
Patient of its dusty lot,
Though its scent be banished ;
Patient of the children's tread,
Though they say it is not sweet.
If a valiant cavalier

Weep upon his quest forlorn,
There a buttercup is born,
Challenging the passers' feet,
Dying underneath their tread,
Golden still though it be dead.

THE BIRTH OF LOVE.

“**D**OES Love come down from heaven like light?
Or grow like flowers out of the ground?
For I mean to seek him day and night,
Till I find him, dear, as you have found.

“ And tell me when your love was born,
I am sure you remember the day ;
Was it out in harvest among the corn ?
Or under the moon in May ?”

“ Ah, not among the golden corn,
Nor in the balmy May,
My love, my little one, was born,
But on a chilly day,—

“ A day too late for winter-time,
And yet too soon for spring,
After the trees have lost their rime,
Before the birds dare sing.

“ At the corner of a dingy street,
When few were passing by,
When I felt in my face the fitful sleet,
And looked at the fitful sky.

“ I know not how, but a buried face
Came back in the cloudy air,
And I looked in my heart a sighing space,
And Love was there.”

FORGET-ME-NOTS.

FORGET-ME-NOTS were blooming
Under the castle walls ;
One said, " They are forgotten
Who feasted in its halls."
" And who would be remembered ?
What is the use of fame ?"
A scholar cried ; " for glory
Is near akin to shame."
Yet he too plucked the flowers,
And his pale face flushed hot,
And gave one to a lady,
And said, " Forget-me-not."

The lady in her cloister
 Burnt her young heart away ;
The scholar in his college
 Grew deaf and dull and grey.
But when they put the grave-clothes
 On each of them at last,
They found that each had cherished
 A relic of the past.
With each of them was buried,
 To ripen or to rot,
Deep underground for ages,
 A blue forget-me-not.

THE RAVEN AND THE DOVE.

LITTLE May Avise kept tryst by night
Where the turf slopes to the sea ;
But to left and right the cliffs gleam white,
And the surf between runs free,
Though the far-off deep in the broad moonlight
Swelled slowly, silently.

Her lover rode down the cliffs amain,
Who used to come from the land,
And there was blood on his bridle-rein,
And the white rose in his hand ;
And there was blood on a broken chain,
And blood on a deep-notched brand.

“What blood is this on your brand, my love?”

“The bandog flew at me.”

“What chain is this hangs from under your glove?”

“Bandogs are chained,” quoth he ;
And “Meet me to-morrow, my own little dove,
Now I have foes to flee.”

When white May Avice kept tryst again

No light was on the deep,
And under the cliffs with slackened rein
She heard her lover leap.

He said, “The watchman has been slain,
He did not choose to sleep.”

He came the next night over the sea,

Her mother came down the land,
And with her a great companie
To make the rover stand ;
Some built for him the gallows-tree,
Some lit for her the brand.

“Daughter Avice, your father is dead,

Your brother is gone to bliss,
Ye have stayed three nights from board and bed,
And wot ye who did this?”

Avice hung her heavy head,

“I waited for his kiss.”

“Daughter, an evil deed is done,
And an evil deed to do,
For ye must burn before the sun,—
Would ye had slain me too!”
“Oh, mother, not before the sun,
Indeed I never knew.

“Oh, mother, take me home to thee,
Then tear me limb from limb,
I will kiss your hands.”—“It may not be;”
And the lady’s eyes grew dim.
“Nay, an ye will not harbour me,
Mother, I go with him.”

She leapt to the boat, she leapt to his knee,
And the tears stood in her eye,
But the boat danced over the dancing sea,
Under the starry sky.

“Oh, what is this I see, my love,
And what is this I hear?”
“The stars are shining bright above,
The waves are plashing clear.”

“ I see the waving of a shroud,
And I hear the dead-bell toll.”

“ It is only the rack of a fleecy cloud,
And the hoarse sea’s sullen roll.”

“ These are my own church bells that ring,
And they deal my mother’s dole ;
I see the Host bleed and I hear the priests sing,
And I feel my mother’s soul.”

“ Cast off, cast off your chain of gold,
That makes the bark go slow,
For there your brother hath taken hold ;”
And she let the gold chain go.

“ Cast off, cast off your cloak of vair,
That makes the head wind blow,
For I see your father tugging there ;”
And she did not say no.

“ Break off your mother’s grizzled hair,
Cast loose the cross of glass,
For I see one standing in the air
By whom we may not pass.”

“Will you give me another cross to wear
If I give mine to thee?”

“I have gems more rich and charms more rare,
But this must sink in sea.”

“Then I love you well, and ye speak me fair,
But my mother’s cross for me.”

“Quick, cast the glass out after the gold,
There may still be time to think
How the sun is warm and the waves are cold,
And brine is a bitter drink.”
She kissed her cross, he stamped on the hold,
And the boat began to sink.

She has set three feathers in her waist,
And crossed two on her eye,
And a white, white dove flies up in haste
Into the windy sky.

He dipped one feather in bitter water,
And cast it over his back,
And a raven, with beak fresh dipped in slaughter,
Sailed up in the white dove’s track.

The dove and raven rise and rise
In ever-narrowing ring,
Till both are lost in breathless skies,
And hear the angels sing.

Yet they seem no nearer to any star,
Though they see neither tree nor hill ;
But the harps of heaven ring very far
When the noise of earth is still.

Faster and faster on they go,
The raven and the dove ;
And now the white dove flies below,
The raven mounts above.

He stooped, he swerved, he frayed the hair
That held the cross of glass ;
Was it a rustle in the air,
Or did an angel pass ?

The white dove rose on wings of snow,
The cross of crystal fell ;
It smote the raven such a blow,
It smote him down to hell.

The white dove, weary and alone,
Dropped down the western wind,
And thought she heard the raven groan,
And flap strong wings behind.

She drifted against the convent bars,
Where the pale sister sings
Her lonely song to the lonely stars,
And there she broke her wings.

She has fluttered on to the nun's thin hand,
And the nun has kissed her warm,
Bound the broken wings with a tender band,
And soothed her from the storm.

She crossed her twice with care and heed,
For she thought she might have spoken
But the little wounds began to bleed,
And the sister knew the token.
So the little dove sang of dumb happy rest
All day, all night, on the sister's breast,
Though the wide white wings were broken.

A WIND OUT OF THE WEST.

A WIND is come out of the west,
Beating down the blue mist on the deep,
But above me the sky is at rest,
And below me the sea is asleep.

Is the wind asleep, too, is it dead,
That scarce bruises the crests of the waves,
With a delicate pitiful tread,
Like a queen gliding over her slaves?

But the sky must be watching with me,
And the brows of her beauty are bowed,
As she leans to look over the sea
On a cushion of pillowy cloud.

Oh, what is the thought of the sky?

Does she look forth in hope or despair?

Is her breath like a song or a sigh

As she draws back the curtain of air?

Oh, what is the thought of the deep,

As it thrills with the wind far away?

Does the wind ever dream in its sleep?

They have surely a secret to say.

Oh, what is the thought of my heart?

Is it this which the sky would require?

A hope that is ready to part

On the lamp of a dying desire.

Does the faint wind go sighing in doubt

Of the way of the spirit? A flame

That burns far away sends it out,—

It returns by the way that it came.

Shall I answer the speech of the sea,

Asking whither my purposes flow?

They journey no whither, like thee,

Like thee they are tossed to and fro.

.

But the truth is, neither the sky,
Nor her manifold daughters the winds,
Nor the bosom of ocean, nor I,
Can fathom the deep of our minds.

So we each of us listen to each,
Tongue-tied, and await a reply,
And as sighing seems nearer to speech
Than laughter, we all of us sigh.

CASTLE JOYOUSGUARD.

A MOTHER and seven daughters
Came sailing out of the East
Over the fretful waters,
Whose surging hath never ceased,
Till they came to a sweet sunshiny place,
And there they rested in God's grace,
And called it Joyousguard.

In the morning they sought for a man of skill
To build them hall and bower ;
And he came at their call and he worked at their will,
And he builded wall and tower.
He did not tell them of his name,
He did not say from whence he came,
Who builded Joyousguard.

They feasted him till morning light,
And they asked him of his hire.
“To have each of you one long, long night
To do me my desire;
Then, though I may not sojourn here,
Yet I shall leave my children dear
To people Joyousguard.”

That day sevensnight to every one,
At the sound of the matin bell,
There was born with joy a goodly son,
Whose name I may not tell,
For they are dead and passed away;
Wherefore no name or place had they
In happy Joyousguard.

But the father of the castle came
To name his children then,
And his eyes were as coals and his hair as a flame,
And he spake not the speech of men;
But, eye to eye and heart to heart,
He showed his liege women in part
The laws of Joyousguard :

“ Keep open house to great and small,
And let the bond and free
Feast day and night within your hall,
But open not to me ;
For I came with joy, but now I go,
And I come again, but I come in woe
To you and Joyousguard.

“ Yet while men are born to fight with me
Your castle shall stand still,
And ye shall be alive and free,
While them I bind and kill ;
Though at the last He will destroy,
Yet hitherto there shall be joy
And peace in Joyousguard.

“ But your roses shall blossom day and night,
And your sun shall always shine,
And your raiment always shall be bright,
And your goblets full of wine ;
For this is the blessing I leave with you,
That false shall be more strong than true
In glorious Joyousguard.”

Since then he hath fought with many
For the walls which were built in sin,
But he could not prevail with any
To let their father in ;
But some were bound and some were slain,
And none who fought came home again
To feast in Joyousguard.

But others have come by night and day
To feast there in their stead,
The banquet is too sweet to stay
For burial of dead.
Yet once they heard a champion's horn
Blown faintly through the dewy morn
To waken Joyousguard.

And following the dying sound,
They saw their champion stand
Upright upon the bloody ground,
Stayed on a two-edged brand,
And having perfect armour on,
Who was a daughter, not a son,
Of Castle Joyousguard.

She said, " My love is lost or dead,
I could not set him free,
But yet I did not bow the head,
I did not bend the knee ;
Wherefore, bear witness, though I die,
My only master is on high,
And not in Joyousguard.

" Though I have drunken of his cup,
Yet I made your father fear,
So hang my ringing armour up,
But bury my sword here ;
And bury me beneath the rose,
The wholesome tree with thorns that grows
Just outside Joyousguard."

And they keep open house there still,
But few can find the way,
The father finds but few to kill,
And few to lead away ;
For they are fallen barren now
Who wear for blazon on their brow
Mothers of Joyousguard.

The arms of mighty men hang down,
The ladies' hair grows white,
A blight is fallen on their renown,
A dearth on their delight ;
On summer eves the nightingale
Is heard above the feast to wail
For fated Joyousguard.

Soon one will push the thorns aside,
Pass through the open door,
And scatter ashes on their pride,
And spit upon the floor ;
Then shall he stamp within the hall,
And then the fire of God shall fall
And burn up Joyousguard.

MORNING DEW.

THE dewdrops vanish one by one,
That seem to glisten everywhere,
Drawn by the kisses of the sun
Into the thirsty lap of air ;
They vanish, and they do not die,
Although the thirsty road be dry.

The dew at night will fall in vain
On broken herbage by the way ;
The dew will change to gentle rain,
And waken far-off flowers to May,
Yet herbs and flowers in every sky,
In every land, are born to die.

The pleasant thoughts of dawning youth
Are parched away by toil and care,

And leave the dusty road of truth,
The trodden path of duty bare ;
And yet our pleasant thoughts are true,
Although they pass like morning dew.

They pass from us, their light is shed
On broken works of weary hands ;
They pass from us, their sweetness fed
Some nobler toil in happier lands ;
Yet every man beneath the sun
Doth all his deeds to be undone.

Our pleasant thoughts are like the dew,
One half of heaven, one half of earth.
They seem to die, but they renew
The sacrament of their sweet birth ;
But fruitful plants and deeds of men
Are earth, and turn to earth again.

In thirsty fields of barren air
The dew is born to fall in vain.
Our thoughts go up to heaven, and there
They change to mists of golden rain,

Whereof the fourfold fountain-head
In Paradise is always fed.

Our thoughts that seem to come and go
Abide, indeed, in God on high;
For He ordains to water so

The only tree that does not die,
And angels in its shadow sit,
But who is he shall eat of it?

THE MASQUE OF NEMESIS.

IN a green and purple shade,
Underneath a poison vine,
Once my weary limbs I laid,
Being flushed with earthly wine.
On my brow I put a braid
Of that deadly greenery.

Very beautiful to see,
Lady Ate sat by me,
Wearing a great crown of gold,
And her raven hair was rolled
On a single crimson fold,
Sewn with pearl embroidery.
And she took my aching head
In strong, cool, white hands, and said,
As she laid it on her knee,

“Many heavy storms are past,”—
Speaking to herself, not me.
But as though to answer her,
Gathering from far and near,
Troops of thunder-clouds uprolled,
And the bower was deadly cold;
Still her voice rang keen and bold,
“This storm will not be the last,”
Speaking to herself, not me.
Then the clouds rolled back again,
And the sky shone without stain,
Only there was no more gold
On the earth or in the day,
But a bleak and naked grey,
And the bower was deadly cold.

Then she said, “Arise and flee
To the inner bower with me,
Where distress and shame are not,
Else it will be worse than thus,”
Pointing to a slimy grot,
Which the vine had overspread,
Where a hissing serpent led,
With a jewelled crest and head.
And I saw a wondrous light,

As of many a star and gem,
Flashing from the cave to us ;
But between was utter night.
Then I felt queen Ate's hem
Sweeping past me to the cave,
And a change was on her pride,
Something paled her diadem.
With a shrill strange voice she cried,
" Follow, or I cannot save."
But another had mine eyes,
Coming up from the sunrise,
Traversing the summer land,
With a staff of memories
Gathered in her muffled hand ;
And the grass and flow'rets fair,
Turned to ripe corn under her ;
But the pleasant trees behind
Shed their leaves upon the wind.
Then I felt her soft strong feet
Trampling out the life of me,
As the summer wastes the lea,
With a burning balmy heat,
Not too deadly to be sweet,
Though it starve the honey-bee.

I looked up into her face,
And the front was full of grace,
Like a queenly prophetess ;
But behind were slimy things,
Part of her, with slimy stings,
Creeping out and creeping in,—
Withered fruits of rottenness
Rolled about her tattered dress,
Till you wondered, was it sin,
Was it time that made her old,
Yet the bower was no more cold.
Then she turned away from me,
Following with silent tread
Wheresoever Ate led,
Whitherward I could not see ;
Left me lying hopelessly,
Fettered by a soothing sense
Of a childlike impotence.

Under me the earth grew clear,
So I saw, I knew not where,
Underneath the southern skies,
Which were flushed with a sunrise,
As my earthly sun had set,—

Saw a blue and rosy sea,
Fringed with palm and myrtle tree.
From one patch of silver sand,
Deep into the unknown land,
Ran a breadth of velvet lea,
Laughing out in dewy glee
Through a cloud of violet.
Then I saw a holy band
Passing by with downcast head ;
In an ancient tongue they said
Prayers I could not understand.
They were maids in robes of snow,
Pacing with sad steps and slow,
Up and down upon the sand,
Like soft shadows hand in hand.
They were shackled three and three,
With a bond of gossamer
Stronger than steel links could be,
Though it seemed more light than air.
But the weight of holy years,
And the dew of loving tears,
And the spell of virgin song,
Made those subtle fetters strong.
After them Euphrosyne

Followed, whom they could not see,
Led by many lingering hours,
Who had bound her feet with flowers,
Lest she should draw nigh too fast ;
And what seemed most strange to me,
She was furthest from the last.
She had roses in her hair,
Roses without thorn, and fair ;
Patience and her sister Care
Watered them with tears that fell
On the mead of asphodel.
Suddenly the viewless air
Closed into a crystal shrine,
Where they wandered hand in hand,
Bound between the sea and land.
In the midmost seemed to shine
Cloudy veils of the divine
Mother of the Destinies,
With a staff of memories
Gathered in a muffled hand.
They began to pray and wail,
Lifting up their faces pale,
“ Show thy glorious face to us,
Let us pass behind the veil ;”

And their eyes grew ravenous.
Then there seemed to go a shout
Through the temple mightily ;
Round the veils and round the throne,
Half within and half without,
And they listened greedily,
And began to wheel about,—
Dancing in a ghastly glee,
Singing, “ Mother set us free.”
And their bonds beneath the strain
Cut their white wrists to the bone,
Yet they seemed to feel no pain.
Ever and anon a hand
Reached from out the light, and drew
Those whose strength was nigh to fail,
From the sight of sea and land,
From the wailing dancing crew,
Into rest behind the veil.

Then I saw another ring
Circling, but not orderly,
All the shrine beside the sea,
Battling each for his own right,
From the morning unto night,

Every one of them a king.
Soon they burst the crystal door,
Trampled all the holy floor,
Stained the silver-sand with gore ;
Burst among the maiden band,
Where they worshipped hand in hand,
Scattering all the lily ring ;
But they could not break the chain
Of their patience and their pain,
Could not make them cease to sing
Snatches of a tender tale,
Till they passed behind the veil.

Rose the damps of sea with night,
Hiding all the shrine from sight ;
Yet I always heard within
All the war and all the din,
All the wailing and the prayer,
Ringing through the dark dim air
Of the living and the dead.
But the silver-throned moon,
Riding in her height of noon,
Showed me a far other sight
In the starry fields of night,
Where a cloudy pall was spread,

Under foot and over head.
Over head of those that fight
Royally, and not aright ;
Under foot of the great car
That came triumphing from far,
Past the ghastly peaks of snow,
Past the buried sunset's glow,
Where a queen rode gloriously,
Whom I knew, though glorified
Since she came in evil tide
Unto my calamity.
Very tender was the grace
Of her coronal and face,
Glistening with mild desire ;
But her royal robe behind
Flowed upon the evening wind,
Like a web of woven fire ;
And the maiden company
Rode by her, and were not pale ;
In their midst Euphrosyne,
Whom they did not care to see,
Having passed behind the veil.
In the front of every one
Shone a lily of a star,

Brighter than the noon-day sun,
Brighter than the pearly car ;
And their victory was sweet,
Cushioning their weary feet
Upon Ate's breast of snow
And the serpent's golden mail.
All the kings were yoked below,
Leaning upon broken spears,
Which were rusted with hot tears ;
Walking with lame steps and slow,
Singing underneath the sky,
In a tongue they had not known,
To their mistress valiantly,
As they bent beneath her throne :—

“ Oh queen of the children of pride,
Hard nurse of the broken-hearted !
Wilt thou never come down and divide,
Till the night and the day have departed ?

“ For they speak of her judgments to men,
And who hath heard her award ?
They speak of her master, and when
Shall we look on the face of her lord ?

“ But her yoke being hard is made strong,
Far away, long ago, without hands ;
In the waters of Right and of Wrong
They annealed her unbreakable bands.

“ Some serve in the hush of the fane,
We serve in the roar of the fight ;
Her servants serve her in pain ;
Hath she any to serve her aright ?

“ They suffer, and do not complain,
We struggle, and do not repine ;
Tears sweeten the smart of her chain,
And the wounds of her warriors shine.

“ If we look for reply or release,
Is it thus she will answer, or thus ?
Nay, at them she holdeth her peace,
She holdeth her peace at us.

“ And her sceptre shall not be broken,
Nor her sacrifice be stayed,
Till the word which cannot be spoken
Shall shine like a star in the shade.

“ Oh Nemesis sitting on high,
Unto whom our glory is shame,
Yet strengthen our hands ere we die,
To worship thy nameless name.”

Then I felt my eyelids swim
To the echo of their hymn,
To the echo of the roar
Of the surge upon the shore ;
To the echo of the fight ;
And the dancing and the wail
Round the shrine and round the veil.
So I slept away the night,
When deep winds awoke grey morn,
I, too, woke, as one forlorn.

WHEN LOVE DIES.

THOUGH the roses fade in her cheek,
And the light is quenched in her eye,
Love grows more tender and meek,
And does not die.

Though the voice that was music untold
Be changed to a dissonant cry,
Love listens hushed as of old,
And does not die.

Though the sun of her smiling be set,
And the dew of her pity be dry,
Love is content just not to forget,
And does not die.

But when Love has given too much,
He is chilled by her careless eyes
And the scorn of her careless touch,
And then Love dies.

When, because Love has sighed too long,
The beloved is weary of sighs,
The fire burns out which was strong,
And then Love dies.

And when Love has kissed away
The flush that used to arise
At a kiss, then his lips are as clay,
And then Love dies.

Love obeys the beloved too well,
He is too understanding, too wise,
For Heaven is turned to Hell
Because Love dies.

THE SONG OF THE ROSE.

AT the gates of the City of Peace
There toiled a poor man night and day,
But his season of mirth and release
Came round with the roses in May.

He sat and sang by the wine,
Where the river of fruitfulness flows,
Till the stars began to shine,
And he sang the song of the rose.

And the city was full of the fame
Of the marvellous song of his mirth,
Till even the Khalifah came,
Who is lord over Islam on earth.

And the lover of roses and spring
Beheld him and did not arise,
Though the princes said, "This is a king,
And the kings are as dust in his eyes."

He said, "God hath one blessing to give
Unto all of his sons and his slaves,
That we each may rejoice while we live,
That we all shall have rest in our grave.

"We shall both be equal then,
Now you throw from the Khalifah's towers
The shadow of God over men,
And I throw it over the flowers.

"Ere the nations lie down with the dead,
They exult in your fatherly sway,—
When the bloom of the roses is fled,
They are glad that I kissed it away."

And he asked and the Khalifah gave
New wine to his brother in spring,
As the gift of a slave to a slave,
The gift of a king to a king.

And he sang till his hair was white,
In the time when the roses blow,
All his life he had great delight,
And they buried him long ago.

The desert has drifted again
To the gates of the City of Peace,
And her citizens labour in vain,
Having neither reward nor release.

Now jackals howl over his head
Who sang the sweet song of the rose,
And the joy of his vineyard is fled,
And only Azrael knows

Of the place where his spirit reposes,
From the flowery path that it trod,
If they carried the lover of roses
To the rose garden of God.

BLIND LOVE.

L OVE, when he lived in heaven,
Saw many lovely things
On earth that seemed worth kissing,
And so Love asked for wings.

He kissed the dew of morning,
And said that it was sweet ;
But when the dew was melted,
He found that it was fleet.

And then he kissed the roses
That opened to the noon,
He kissed the brooks at evening
That sparkled in the moon.

So all the spring and summer
He flew about and fed
On sunshine and on kisses,
For kisses are Love's bread.

And even in the autumn
He loved the red leaves' glow,
And even in the winter
He loved the virgin snow.

But when the roses faded,
And when the leaves fell down,
And when the white snow melted,
Then Love began to frown.

And as he flew no whither,
He saw a woman go
In singing and in sighing
Among the melting snow.

Her face was fair as ever,
And Love would feed thereon ;
He asked her for her kisses,
But she was woebegone.

So she withheld her kisses,
And said her heart was cold,
And sighed, "You will forsake me,
For I too shall grow old."

When she lay down in sorrow
Love stole a kiss at last,
But when Love would fly further,
The woman held him fast.

Yet when Love knelt and pleaded,
And said he was in pain,
Because the land was barren,
She let him go again.

Because the land was barren,
He thought that she was fair ;
Because the land was barren,
He fluttered back to her.

And she had called her sisters
To clip the wings of Love,
And they had built a prison
With painted stars above.

Love flew into the prison
And sat upon the floor,
And while the youngest kissed him
The eldest shut the door.

Love flew about among them,
For each he thought was fair;
And while he flew, the prison
Had melted into air.

They only held him closer,
Lest he should fly away;
And sought to pluck his feathers
Who was content to stay.

They, when they could not hold him,
Waxed angry with their bliss;
And covered up their faces,
Lest Love should see and kiss.

So Love grew faint with fasting,
And spake to them and said,
“ My wings are all my glory,
But take my eyes instead.

“ I need my wings to carry
Your heavy souls with me,
But while I feel your beauty
I have no need to see.”

In heaven Love has a mother
Who never asked for wings,
Because she was not careful
To look at many things.

She, looking out of heaven,
Said, “ Child, you are not wise,”
But Love was very hungry,
So they put out his eyes.

They thought, though Time will mar us
With sorrow and with pain,
Blind Love will never know it,
And flutter back again.

Yet they had little profit,
Except to be accurst,
For Love grew weary of them,
But they grew weary first.

Nor did his wings of glory
 Advantage eyeless Love,
For none could journey with him,
 Though all were fain thereof.

He flutters now no whither
 Among unlovely things,
To seek his wingless mother
 On soiled and broken wings.

AT HENNACLIFF.

THIS beetling crag of flint and clay,
This watercourse and hollow dell,
Morwenna eyed them far away—
How often!—from her Cambrian cell.

The white gulls circle now as then,
The heather blossoms as of old,
Though now the kine of living men
Brush from the furze the dewy gold.

I lie upon Morwenna's land,
I see the sights Morwenna saw,
I almost feel her shadowy hand
Hallow the air with virgin awe.

I almost see the open eyes,
The drooping lids that tell of prayer,
Of vigils under midnight skies,
Of trances in chill morning air ;

And, smiling through a tearless cloud,
A gracious visage pure and pale,
A princely stature, scarcely bowed
Beneath the heavy hanging veil ;

As when she stood before the king
To ask a largess for the Lord,
And waited while he turned his ring
And half unbraced his heavy sword,—

Until he gave, beneath the hill
That parts the billows to and fro,
The stead for church and priest, where still
Her name is green at Morwenstow.

Her priests prevailed to chase or tame
The shadows heathens loved or feared,
But, though the new God overcame,
The old gods had been more revered.

Her church that overhangs the sea
Is stately in its emptiness,
So few therein will bend the knee,
It grew till it was comfortless.

And yet her empty church will stand
While the white sea-gulls circle there,
And she will pray for Tamar land,
Though men forget to pray to her.

At least the moors, which fall and rise
Inland, have felt the biting share,
And now the land is tilled,—the skies,
I think, must be the sunnier there.

Yet underneath the ancient deep
Still eats the ancient rocks away,
And even in its fitful sleep
Moans, never satiated with prey.

Yet round the church the graves are filled
With shipmen cast upon the shore,
And ravens scent the wrecks and build
At Hennacliff as heretofore.

AMABEL.

“ In partibus torrentis pars tua : hæc est sors tua.”

A MABEL was fairy led.
In the holy month of May,
As she went at break of day
To Saint Mary's church to pray ;
Stooping low her white veiled head
'Neath the dewy hawthorn spray,
From her hands she dropt her beads
In the glistening water reeds.

Looking down, she saw instead,
Neither holy beads nor book,
But beyond the purling brook,
Where a broader river rolled,

In the morning's pearly light,
On his knees a fairy knight,
Who was clad in green and gold.

He was kneeling toward the west,
And the blazon of his crest
Seemed in jewelled words to say,
"Day is night and night is day."

Then the Lady Amabel
Answered, "I will go and see
Who this fairy knight can be,
Who has charmed my beads from me."

But the old nurse shook her head,
Thinking, "Nothing here goes well,
She will pay their tithe to hell,"—
Saying, falteringly and slow,
"Oh, my darling, never go
On the road you do not know:
Let your first loss be your last,
Though they were your mother's beads.
I am old, my time is past,
Soon my death-bed will be spread,
Yet I know that nothing needs
More on earth than light and air,
More in heaven than love and prayer;

Though you grieve the whole day long
Peace will come with even-song."

Amabel gave little heed,
Kissed her nurse, and crossed herself
From the witchcraft of the elf,
Ran across the jewelled mead ;
All the little flowers of May
Twined themselves about her feet,
Till she murmured, " Spring is sweet ;"—
But she would not sit or stay.

Mountains which she had not seen
Hemmed the widening cirque of green
With their purple buttresses ;
Far away their crests of snow
Sparkled with a rosy glow
Through their forest draperies,
While the sun drank up the dew
Into heaven's pearly blue.
Still she ran, and still the knight
Knelt before her full in sight ;
But the meadow seemed to spread,
And the sun began to beat
Fiercely on her white-veiled head,
And a thunder-cloud or two

Cut into the deepening blue
With an edge of watery light.
Amabel with weary feet,
Trammelled by the tangled flowers,
Murmured, "May is over sweet,"—
But she would not count the hours.

Then she heard the dead-bell toll,
"Mother Mary, rest the soul
Who is gone to God in May ;"
Heard the muffled thunder roll,
Said, "There is no time to stay ;"
Ran again, until she heard
Even the rustling of his beard :
Still he seemed to stay for her,
Did not turn away or stir,
But he knelt to tell her beads
Still beside the water weeds.

Amabel sat down to rest,
Thought it ill to break his prayer :
"Though he worship to the west,
God," she said, "is everywhere."
In the sultry scented air,
Amabel's blue eyes grew dim,
But she kept them fixed on him ;

Murmured, " May is not so fair,"—
Waited till the sky grew black,
Till she could not see the sun ;
Looked a-down the lengthening track
To the little clump of hay,
Where the prince still knelt to pray—
Prayers too subtle to be spoken,
Whether unto heaven or hell.
Then poor little Amabel
Started up in half-dismay,
Followed him the live-long day,
Walking where she could not run ;
Still he seemed as far away
As before her quest begun.

Then fair Amabel looked back,
And the fairy spell was broken,
And the serpent lightnings woke,
And the lordly thunder spoke.
When she turned her cowering head,
Knight and mead and day were fled ;
She was standing all alone,
Clinging to a blasted tree,
On the blackened crumbling stone
Of a ghastly precipice,

Looking o'er a field of ice,
To a leaden waste of sea,
Heaving most unquietly
'Neath a leaden wrack of sky.

Just below she spied a crone
Cringing low for charity,
Gathering sticks, and always double,
With the weight of years and trouble.

Amabel could hear her say,
" Mary was not always queen
Of the merry month of May ;
Surely I have known the green
Brighter in Dione's day."

Amabel gave little heed
To the beggar's blasphemy ;
Said that she had lost her way,
" Can you guide me homeward, pray ?
Well my father will repay
If you help me at my need."

" Stay and rest," the beggar said,
" Till the tempest pass away,
Till the moon bring back the day.
Stay within my cave and feed ;
Have you eaten aught to-day ?"

“No,” she said ; “ I miss it now ; ”
Took the beggar’s hand, who led,
Just beneath the mountain’s brow,
To a cavern, whose low mouth
Fronted to the west and south,
Guarded by a deep brown lynn.

Amabel turned very pale
As she stooped to enter in,
And the earthy roof and floor
Stained her vesture and her veil.
But the beggar shut the door,
Hung the walls with tapestry,
Lit a fire, and led her on
To a seat of woven grass ;
Gave her yellow robes to don,
By a lamp and looking-glass,
Which were framed in ebony ;
Gave her venison and mead,
Gave her milk and honey-comb,
Gave her cake of lotus-seed,
That she might forget her home.
“ Are you rich,” said Amabel,
“ Mother, for you feast me well ?
Why is it you choose to dwell

In this lonely low-browed cell?"
"I will tell you, but not now,
Why a solitary vow,
Terrible to break or keep,
Holds me here in shameful weed,
Begging things I do not need.
It is time you were asleep,
After all your weary sorrow;
I myself am tired, too,
I will lead you home to-morrow."

Amabel said, "That is true,
It were wrong to trouble you,
Though the moon is very bright."
So she slept till morning light—
Hardly saw, with sleepy eyes,
How the beggar rose and sang
Snatches of a sleepy tune,
Honied, old world lullabies,
As the bell for matins rang.
So she turned and slept till noon—
Woke at last in merry mood,
Eat her fill of that strange food,
Turned to go upon her way.

But the beggar took a hair,

One from all her golden head,
Braided it with tender care,
Breathed on it, and turned it grey ;
Whispering to Amabel,
As she turned it on her hand,
“ Lady fair, you understand
You are mine until you pay
For the shelter of my cell.”
“ In what coin ?” the maiden said.
“ Ask the priest if he can tell.”
“ How if I forget to pay ?”
“ I should send and fetch you then,
Sell you to black-wizard men.”
“ When ?” “ Within a year and day.”
Amabel said, “ Tell me now
Of your solitary vow ?”
“ Yes, as soon as you can say
In what coin you mean to pay.”

Amabel, with drooping head,
Followed where the beggar led,
Through a garden of bog-roses,
Which have neither thorn nor fruit,
But a mandrake at their root ;
Where the brown moor-king reposes,

With a bulrush for a flute,
Through a rocky mossy dell,
Where the early fox-gloves grew
By the path; the wood was blue
With the hyacinths below,
All the hospitable trees
Shaken by a scented breeze
Over frail anemones ;
Through a field of corn knee-high,
Green against the pale blue sky ;
Down a bank of gorse and heather,
Still the twain went on together
Mutely, in the rich spring weather,
By a road towards the right,
Till the maid saw home in sight.

Then the beggar said, " Farewell,
And remember, Amabel,
If you do not mean to pay,
Come before the year and day,
For you will not miss the way ;
And I will not sell you then
Far away to wizard men.
You shall be my slave, and wear
Silken fetters soft and fair,

Woven of your golden hair,
Which I will not change to grey."

"Shall I turn with you to-day?"
Amabel began to say,
When she saw her father stand
On the drawbridge-parapet,
Beckoning her with mailed hand,
And she thought his eyes were wet;
So she ran to him apace,
Would have kissed his grizzled face,
But he put her back, and said,
"Do you know your nurse is dead,
Dead because you ran away?"

Ah, indeed," said Amabel,
"Mary Mother rest her well;
Then I heard the passing bell
Tolling for her yesterday;
But I had no time to stay,
Seeking for my mother's beads
Lost among the water-weeds,
Stolen by the winds of May
For an elfin diadem,
Though I learnt to pray with them."

"Yes, she said a fairy knight

Lured you far beyond her sight,
And she thought it was not well,
You would serve them far away
In a land of mock delight,
Till you paid their tithe to hell.
And where were you all the night ?”
“ In a beggar-woman’s cell,
Who had asked for charity,
But she feasted me right well,”
Amabel said carelessly.
“ And she gave those yellow weeds,
Which you wear so daintily,
For her master’s livery ?
Did she give you back your beads ?
Let me have no more to fear,”
Said the baron moodily.

Cowering from her father’s eye,
Amabel half wished again
For rich food and silken chain ;
Said, between a silver tear
And a soft self-pitying sigh,
“ No, they are not worth a thought,
While my nurse is lying here ;
Take me to her, take me quick,”

And she looked so faint and sick,
And so innocently pale,
That her sire forgot the tale
Of the sins he should have sought.
And she reached to his right hand,
As one weak and like to fall;
Still she seemed too frail to stand,
Twined about his hard grey mail,
Like to ivy on a wall,
Where a golden watery ray
Clings on a November day,
Though the trees behind are grey.

Softly then she followed him
To a chamber veiled and dim,
Where the aged woman lay.
They had curtained out the May,
But the windows' cross of red
Struggled through into the gloom,
Flickered on the shaded room,
Flickered on the lowly bed,
On the sallow hoary dead.

Amabel knelt down to pray,
And true sobbing tears fell fast,
All too bitterly to last;

Till she rose for weariness,
Wiped the scalding drops away,
Went to change her yellow dress,
To her chamber silently ;
Clothed herself in pearly grey,
Soft and fit to hide the band,
Woven tight about her hand,
For a charm and for a chain,
For she felt it pinch again ;
Veiled with black her golden head,
“What is it I miss?” she said,
As she went despondingly,
Where the matted hawthorn spread
A dew-laden canopy,
Dark against the western light.
Ever without pause she sped,
Following the vesper bell,
Shuddering half for fear of hell,
Half for horror of the night,
Till she found her place to rest,
In a corner by the west.
But the people shrank from her,
Whispering, “She is fairy led ;
Though she look so good and fair,

See she cannot speak a prayer :
God, she knows, will never hear
Anything that she can say.”
And indeed she spake no word,
But her spirit seemed to sing
Blindly,—as a moulting bird
Sings at eve with folded wing,—
Musing in a listless dream,
Half of God and half of folly,
Wholly sweet and melancholy,
Till the latest hymn had died
On the calm of eventide.
Then the moon, with sudden gleam,
Rose above a jagged cloud,
In the face of Amabel,
Whose austere intensity
Quickened all her memory,
Broke the dream which could not last,
Woke the hunger of the past,
And she knew the water-reeds
Where she lost her mother’s beads.
“I must find them soon,” she said ;
“Then the spiteful envious crowd
Will not call me fairy-led.”

So she rose with morning light,
Searched until no dew was left,
But she saw no fairy knight ;
Then she sat among the flowers,
Desolately, many hours,
In a tangled little cleft,
Where the purple loosestrife grew,
Mixed with wanton meadow-sweet,
Where she paddled in the brook
With bare travel-blistered feet,
With a wistful haggard look,
Counting May-flies as they flew,
Till the balmy sultriness
Melted all her discontent
Into dreamy idleness ;
Then she slept an hour or two,
Till the twilight and the dew
Broke her day-dream ; then she went
With the vesper bell, to pray
For God's pardon on a day
Sweetly wasted, evil spent ;
Tost upon her curtained nest,
Moodily, unquietly,
Feeling in her dreams unblest,

As she missed the lullaby
Of Saint Mary's rosary,
Which had lulled her once to rest.
So the holy month of May
Slipt into the dusk away,
While poor little Amabel
Faded in her vest of grey,
Fasting on a barren quest,
Soothed and saddened day by day,
As she kissed the passing flowers,
Which were shrivelling one by one,
As the fierceness of the sun
Gathered with the summer hours.
But upon a rosy eve,
When the sun set gloriously,
Flaming through the tracery
Of the window in the West,
Which fair Amabel loved best,
And her heart began to glow
With its early triumphing ;
Suddenly she marked the ring,
Which defiled her wrist of snow,
Witnessing her slavery ;
Still she was too glad to grieve,

Said, "I will make haste to pay,
Will not wait the year and day."
So she waited for the priest,
Told him all her tale of woe,
Only spake not of her chain;
While he looked, and could not see
What she strove to break in vain,
And she wept and felt heart-free,
As he said "God pardon thee,"
And the daybreak flushed the east.
"You shall hence to cloister-cell,
There you will be guarded well
From the powers of earth and night,
And the world of mock delight:
If they sue you as they may,
Then your angel in God's might
With a fiery sword will pay
All the debt you owe to hell."
So the priest and Amabel
Walked away with downcast eyes
In the beautiful sunrise;
But her maiden heart beat high
As she met her father's eye,
And he gave her leave to go

To God's garden, where the flowers
Fast from sun and feast on showers,
And the chaste buds never blow ;
But in hell they have their root,
And in heaven they bear their fruit.
There was summer overhead ;
She with autumn in her heart,
Full of thoughts unharvested,
Bowing in her yellow weeds,
Which she took again for shame ;
Walked, with aching feet and lame,
Through the upland marishes,
Shadowy, broad, and desolate,
By the flinty path that leads
To the stunted cypresses,
And the low-eaved cloister-bound,
Where the widowed virgins wait
For the coming of their mate,
Like the turtle,—comfortless ;
And the mountain damps are hung
On the winds of bitterness,
Over all the holy ground.
“ Sister, you are very young,”
Said the portress at the gate.

Damp and thick, a corpse-like smell
Caught the breath of Amabel,
Clinging to the rotten wall,
Which is driven round the space
Where dead sisters sleep in grace,
Where the living sisters flit
With slow dreamy steps, or sit,
Broidering each the funeral pall
Which shall be her marriage vest.
“ Sisters, have you any rest
In the service of your King ?”
Amabel said shuddering.
“ Seeking us He rested not
On the road to Calvary,”
Said the Abbess grey and pale.
Amabel said, “ I forgot,
For He suffered long ago ;
Now I wander wearily,
Who am weak. And are you strong,
Do you find the twilight long ?
Can you see the stars shine through,
Under your black-folded veil ?
But what need to ask of you ?
If I live here I shall know.”

So they shore her yellow hair,
And they changed her yellow weeds,
And they gave her bitter seeds
Strung in a black rosary ;
And they told her she was fair
As a bride espoused should be ;
Took her to the shrine to sing
Songs of praise for sins forgiven,
To her Spouse and to her King ;
On the wings of melody
Half her heart went up to heaven,
Half was inly wrung with pain
By the fretting of the chain,
Which the sisters could not see ;
Then they led her to her cell,
Gave her wool to spin a shroud,
In the shadow of a cloud,
Seen between black window-bars,
In a twilight without stars ;
Kissed her as they said farewell,
Shut the door on Amabel.

So the maiden span and sang
Of the burial of her King,
Till the bell for compline rang ;

Then she found her place in choir,
Voice and heart still quivering
With old Pain and young Desire,
Mother of a new Despair.
As she passed to take her rest,
With wet eyes and throbbing head,
Bowed upon the cross of red
Woven on her coarse white vest,—
Soft and summer laden air
Sighed about the cloister bare,
And was balmy even there ;
All the dewy herbs were bright,
Where the moon's delicious light
Scarcely veiled by clouds was shed.

As she knelt beside her bed,
She could see the fairy knight,
With a diadem of stars,
Looking through the window bars ;
Still he seemed to tell the beads
Lost among the water weeds,
But the silver cross was gone
Which beforetime hung thereon ;
In its stead a heart was seen,
Girdled with a wreath of green,

Which was knit about a star.
Amabel would cross the elf,
Bade him answer for himself,—
“Nay, why did you turn away?
For I waited long for you,
Waited all a summer day;”
So he said. “That is not true,
And you only seemed to stay,”
Said the novice angrily.
“There are many things that seem;
In the sunshine you were free,
You had hope of finding me;
Now you walk in a sick dream,
Where grey shadows only are,”
Said the elfin patiently.
“Give me back what you have taken,
Then I shall not feel forsaken,
Though I walk in twilight here,”
So she pleaded; but the elf
Said, “You have to thank yourself
That your life is blank and drear;
Come into the light with me,
Kiss my mouth with kisses three,
You shall have your rosary.”

But the Abbess came to see,
If her novice rested well ;
When he heard her faltering tread,
Then the fair knight vanished
From the sight of Amabel,
As he said, " Forget me not."
But the Abbess' aged eyne
Saw him like an angel shine,—
Like an angel set to keep
Watch at the low truckle-bed
Where poor Amabel feigned sleep,
Feigned until the matin bell
Woke her from a dream of hell.
Then she watched till morning light,
Musing on her helpless lot,
Went about dull tasks all day,
Marvelling if the fairy knight
Would flash out upon her sight ;
But the vision never came ;
So her sick life wore away,
Slowly, sadly, still the same,
Like an endless, aimless lay,
Till the moons brought back the May.
Then they sent meek Amabel

All alone to fast and pray
On the convent Calvary
For a happy wedding day.
Coming thence, she met a crone
Who went slow and stumblingly,
Clad in serving sister's grey,
With a face that she had known
Somewhere, where she could not tell :
As she past she heard her say,
Though the crone spake mumblingly,
“ Pretty novice, will you pay,
Will you wait the year and day ?”
Stood the novice full of fear,
Crossed herself, and,—“ You are here !
Know you of the fairy knight ?
You and he seem everywhere.”
“ Yea, his name is Lost Delight,
And his castle standeth near ;
All earth's joy is buried there,
Stored to deck his bridal bed.
I too am a fairy queen,
And they call me Evergreen ;
I must haunt you till you wed.”
“ Never with your prince,” she said ;

“ In God’s name are you of hell ?”

“ No, upon the road I dwell,
But with leave to halt halfway.”

“ Shall I see the knight again ?”

“ If you dare to venture, yea.”

“ And win back my rosary ?”

“ If you do not flinch from pain
And obey me perfectly.”

“ Can you set my spirit free ?”

“ If you trust my ministry.”

“ I will do as you shall say.”

“ It is late, but it is well.”

So they parted, and that night,
Very late within her cell,
Just before the matin bell,
Stood the fair prince, Lost Delight,
And he murmured tenderly,
“ You will keep your tryst with me.”
Then he stooped to kiss her hand ;
At his kiss the ring thereon
Changed into a shining band
Bright with mystic jewellery,
Where the tender opal shone
Wet with dews of mystery.

Evergreen came as he went,
Came to bid the novice sleep,
For the lady Abbess said,
“She is wasted, weak, and bent,
And her sunken cheek is pale,
Whiter than her wimpled veil;
She will die before she wed,
Die, and have no time to weep.”

So she slept until the Morn
Kissed her eyelids with a kiss,
Very tender, very keen,
Hard to bear, and hard to miss.
Then the sister Evergreen
Crowned her with the thorn of May,
Said, “You must not wait to pray,
All your golden hair is grey,
You have far to go to-day,
Crowned with flowers of healing thorn.”
Joyously went Amabel,
Leaping like a tethered fawn,
For the glistening dewy dawn
Threw a tender, dreamy spell
Over the bare cloister cell;
And one spray of wilding rose

Flung across the gleaming sky,
Whitherward she clomb at leisure,
By a path that mounted high,
Till the lonely convent sank
Underneath the dreary bank
Whence the twain tripped down together
To a land of lower pleasure,
Where the rushes changed to heather,
Buds of heather, flowers of broom,
Springing between rocky crests
Frosted o'er with mossy bloom ;
All the many coloured hill
Lay asleep in shadow still,
And the birds were in their nests,
Save one skylark, only one,
Far away shrill matins sung
To his idol king the sun.
Evergreen said, " Amabel,
God's betrothed, have you no tongue ?"
" Hush," she said, " I cannot tell,
But my singing days are done,
Wasted on woe wanton lays ;
Let me use my seeing days
Ere my morn of life is gone."

So the twain went mutely on
Till they saw faint points of dew
Glimmering through the tufted gloom
Of the deepening, widening glen,
Where the wide-armed bracken grew,
And the birch between the broom :
And at each step Evergreen
Towered to a statelier queen
In the sight of Amabel,
With a look more motherly,
As the water plashed between
Rockier banks with louder swell,
Not too loud for lullaby.

When the sun was riding high
On a cloudy canopy
Woven slowly overhead,
Where a sultry shadow fell
On the larches of the glen,
Where a mountain torrent ran
Deep enough for fishermen,
Ran to mingle with a river,
Where the tawny eddies swept
Round grey boulders, till they leapt
With a broken, fretful shock,

Over scoops of living rock,
With a sudden sunlit shiver,
While the lesser runnels crept
In the shadow, here and there,
Over tufts of maidenhair :—

Then the fairy queen began
Stately speech to Amabel,
Kissed her maiden brow, and said,
“ Since I am not sent of Hell,
Daughter, it were well to say,
If you trust my ministry,
Wherewithal you mean to pay,
Being just as well as brave,
When you have your rosary ?”
Amabel spake falteringly,
Faltering for eagerness,
“ Put the fetters on your slave,
Brand her with your royal brand,
Lead her captive through your land,
Shackled straitly, lest she stray
On the lonely, untried way,
From her mother and her queen,
Whose she is to save or slay :
Bind your daughter’s hands and feet,—

Bondage will be very sweet
Now I am not motherless."

Then the lady Evergreen,
With exceeding tenderness,
Took her slave, the motherless,
And she bound her as she said,
And she set three stars of red
With two ivy leaves between
On her brow and either hand,
For they were her royal brand.
"Thank you, mother, this is well;
Now," she murmured, "I can tell
How you love your Amabel."
Evergreen hung over her,
Feeding on her with mute eyes,
Pleading with low rapturous sighs,
To her bondmaid for a kiss,
Like a happy worshipper,
Kneeling in the sight of bliss.
Then she rose, though loth to rise,
Meekly, when her boon was won,
Laid her darling in the sun,
Spake to her beseechingly,—
"I have bound you, little one,

For the virtue of my chain
Charms from weariness and pain
Those who wear it lovingly ;
But if once you seek to stray,
Your desire will melt away
Any chain that I can weave ;
I shall sit alone and grieve,
Till they make me rise and slay
My beloved Amabel.

Therefore when you see the knight,
Pity me, my sweet, sweet child,
Dearly bought and undefiled,
Worn with travel, without stain,
If you wish to see your cell,
Or your father's house again ;
When you see your jewels shine
In the hand of Lost Delight,
Do not loose your hand from mine,
If you love me, Amabel."

Amabel with white lips spake,
" Slay me, mother, for love's sake
Ere the bonds I love can break,
Slay me now, for I am weak ;
In my cell I find no grace,

In my father's house no place,
Let me not die motherless :”
And she raised a trustful cheek
For her mother's cheek to press ;
But the other shook her head
Very piteously, and said,
“ Sweet, I love you none the less,
You are but the sweeter slave
For this clinging helplessness,
Which I have no charm to save.”
“ Then you think that I must die ?”
“ Nestle closer to my breast,
Darling, though the sun is high,
We have still an hour to rest,
For your tryst is made at noon,—
Rest and ask me for a boon.”
“ Mother, will you tell me now,”
Amabel said, “ of your vow,
And my wandering, weary quest,
When I met you in the west ?—
You were not so loving then.”
“ When the world and I were young,
Undefiled by evil men,
In my ears a woodbird sung

Very sweetly, but a hawk
Stooped upon it from the sky,
Struck the bird, and fled my eye ;
Then I saw the throstle lie
Bleeding in the myrtle walk,
Underneath the broken stalk
Where a drooping floweret hung :
Then I sank upon the sod,—
You remember I was young,—
Then my weak voice faltered, ‘ Why ?’
And an angel from on high
Spake, ‘ It is the will of God.’
Then I sware to recreate
All that He made desolate
Ere despair had vanquished hate.
He, whose privilege it is
Without lying to deceive,
Ere I asked it, gave me leave,
Bade me be vicegerent,
Till His great and dreadful day,
On whatever feels decay
In this lower world of His.
As I sat upon my throne,
Blindly proud of punishment,

Fashioning the sweet wood green
To woodbirds of sweeter tone,
Came his messenger to say,—
‘Know you not, O fairy queen!
That the fount of fruitfulness
Springeth in the wilderness?
Leave your handmaids here to play
In this dewy, curtained hall;
From your solitary height
You should send them wherewithal,
From your darkness to their light.’
Shuddering since that day I dwell
At the parting of the water,
In the solitary cell
Where you found me, O my daughter!
Begging in the desert there
For whatever men would waste,
And I mould it by-and-bye
Into joys I may not taste,
Beauty I may never wear;
If I loiter, if I stay
On my work a single day,
Then the Judgment Day is nigh
When I know that I must die,

Die in burning pains of hell,
Die for ever, Amabel,
Die upon the very day
You begin with God to dwell,
For He is both heaven and hell,
As I hear His angels say.”
“Tell me, mother, if you may,
Why you seem unlovely there,
Though your true face is so fair.”
“I love those, sweet, that love me,
And I give them eyes to see
What I am not but would be.”
“Have you left your work to-day,
Have you leave to be away?”
“Little one,” said Evergreen,
“My right hand is everywhere,
And my face where it is seen.”
“I am answered, O my queen!”
“Is there more that you would know?
Tell me, sweet, before we go
Where we must walk silently.”
“Tell me how he fled away
While he seemed to kneel and pray.”
“Know you not the place he knelt,

Whether it seemed far or nigh,
As you journeyed, only dwelt
In your tearful, wistful eye?
And before you went astray
You had but to stretch your hand,
Without peril, without pain,
Over all that fairy land
And take back your bliss again.
Do not murmur, Amabel ;"—
For a sobbing Ave fell
As she heard by what a spell
She was sold to sweet despair—
"Do not weep,—a single tear
Breaks the peaceful chain you wear.
Little one, be comforted,
Be content, we love you well,
Love you more than heaven," she said,
Raining kisses wistfully
On her little bondmaid's head,
Till it sank upon her knee.
There was silence half an hour
In the windless bracken bower
By the rocky waterside,
Like the silence up in heaven

While God's anger like a tide
Gathered in the vials seven
With redeeming vengeance fraught
Ere the latest seal was riven.
Neither spake and neither thought,
Each within her inmost heart
Hugged the happiness apart
Which she thought not of but felt.
Amabel half-clung, half-knelt
To her mother, who, upright,
Looked at something out of sight,
Listened for some voiceless speech ;
In that feverish, glad hush
You might think you heard the flush
Stealing o'er the cheek of each,
As they watched the moments pass
In the summer hourglass,
Wishing now to stay the sun,
And the leaping, headlong river,
In that pleasant dream for ever
Now to have their waiting done.
Suddenly the fairy queen
Rose with a low, stifled groan,
Said, " The time is short, my daughter,"

Bared the feet of Amabel,
Led her up the roaring water
By a craggy, rifted dell
Overflowing with dim gloom,
Where the sunbeams had no room
(If the sunbeams came) to play,
And the weltering, steaming foam
Whirled impatiently between
Rocks that crumbled in its spray,
As it panted to its home
In the ocean far away,
Fretting that it had to stay
Where few broken ferns were seen,
In the vista of grey stone
Overarched with golden green.
Swiftly, steadily the twain
Journeyed over slimy ledge,
Set their feet on jagged edge,
Without stumbling, without pain,
For her mother's magic chain
Still bore up May Amabel;
Then the sudden turning dell
Let the magic sunlight in
On the lower hanging leaves,

On the early barley sheaves,
On the dancing river's din.
There, but not by earthly light,
Amabel saw Lost Delight,
Very royally bedight
In the richest of his state,
Sitting on a rainbow throne
O'er the highest waterfall,
Singing in a tender tone
Queen Dione's litany,
Saw his face and heard him call,
"Come, my love, I may not wait."
Then she brake her mother's band,
Then she loosed her mother's hand,
Leapt to meet her lover's kiss,
Caught and kissed her rosary,
Murmured, "God be thanked for this,
God and Sister Evergreen."
At the word the fairy queen,
Clad in clinging corpselike white,
Girt and crowned with shivering light,
Stood upon the maiden's right
As she sat beside him there,
On the throne of painted air ;

And the maiden fearlessly
Thanked her for her ministry,
But the other huskily,
Fingering at the broken bands,
Said, "I lose my sweetest slave;"
Then she stood and wrung her hands
As the throne sank silently,
Fading from her moveless eye.
Clinging unto Lost Delight,
Amabel said, "O my knight!
For I give myself to thee,—
Help me now before I die."
"I can follow, cannot save."
Amabel, still unaghast,
Would have told her rosary,
But she sank with him too fast
Into many-coloured spray,
Under the white hawthorn-tree
In the holy noon of May.

What had once been Amabel
Whirled adown the fairy dell,
Whirled along by rock and lea,
Through the shadow, through the sun,

Till the river let the weight
Rest awhile in sight of sea,
By her father's water-gate,
That her father might behold
What a work on her was done ;
Both her hands and visage shone
Like to sapphire, clear and cold,
Save her lady's brand thereon,
And her novice robe of white
Was shot through with amber light,
And the red cross, emerald,
And an opal cross shone too,
Sometimes rosy, sometimes green,
On her crystal brow of blue,
Where her chrisom cross had been,
But she kept her locks of gold.
Then the baron, standing there,
Saw her slowly float away
From the mossy water-stair,
From the bolted water-door,
And no eyes beheld her more.
Sent the tidings of dismay
To the moorland cloister bare,
Bade the moody henchman say,
" You have kept your novice well."

Then the Abbess left her cell,
Bade the sisters toll the bell,
“ Pray for her, although she fell,
Lured away by snares of hell,—
Pray for little Amabel,
It may help her,—who can tell ?”

But the sister Evergreen,
Who had entered in unseen,
As she went away unspied,
To the youngest novice said,
“ While you weep for Amabel,
While you curse the fairy knight,
Fairy fingers deck the bride
In the land of Lost Delight,
And she pillows her flushed head
In the shadow of his side,
Or she dances with the dead,
With the merry blue-faced dead,
Who are never fairy-led.”

“ In resurrectione igitur cujus erit mulier ?”

AFTER DARK.

WHEN the trail of the parting sunset
Has swept the air away,
And the trees on the hill-tops shiver
In the breath of the ghost of day ;

We thrill with the rapture of spirits,
Who are always hovering there ;
But we feel their presence only
In the awful twilight air.

We seem to be driven and lifted
By longings without a name,
Till the dew falls heavy upon them,
And they vanish as they came.

They vanish ; the night and the darkness
Prevail and increase and abound,
Dropping down like a film from the stars,
Steaming up like a mist from the ground ;

And we move about in the shadow
Of a fruitful brooding fear,
Till over the yellowing woodlands
The harvest moon shines clear,

And she washes away the darkness
With her tender and meaningless light,
To guide wanderers out of the terrors
And the mysteries of the night.

At home, by her light where we left them,
Before we were lured away,
We find our true selves, and to-morrow
Is barren, like yesterday.

“SI DESCENDERO IN INFERNUM
ADES.”

I.

IN the church beside the sea
Lay the Lady Rosalie,
And she had beneath her head
Roses for her bridal bed,
And she had beneath her feet
Roses for her winding-sheet.
She had priests to pray for her,
But there were no lilies there,
So she kept her state in white,
Like a daughter of the light.
And there waited through the night,
Housed with silk, a steed of might,
Half of gold and half of fire,
Shod and bridled with desire,

Till a knight strode past the priest,
Seemed as he had left a feast,
Staggering with shut, swollen eyes,
Singing glees that sank to sighs,
To the bier of Rosalie,
In the church beside the sea.
And he kissed the lily cheek,
And he found a voice to speak :
"Now the black cross shineth steady,
Now the golden horse is ready ;
Rise, my love, with me and ride,
I am bridegroom, thou art bride ;
For the shadows flee away
Into everlasting day."

Neither bier nor flower stirred ;
Floating over them you heard
A low lamentable word :
"What is Victor come to win ?
Who is he that let him in ?
I have fasted, I have wept,
Watched and prayed and never slept,
Given gold and bent the knee
In the shrines of over sea,
That I should not ride with thee."

Then the knight stood still and said,
“I am damned, and thou art dead,
Therefore thou shalt lay thy head
Where my heart burns still for thee;
Thou shalt sit upon my knee,
Strain thy arms to cling to me.
Wherefore lavish gold and fee
On the saints thou shalt not see,
On the shrines thou hast forsworn?
Thou wilt be more wise at morn;
For the lamps of hell burn steady,
And the horse of hell is ready.”

“Am I damned, and art thou dead?
God and Heaven are overhead.
They are not forsworn,” she said.
Then the bier and flowers were stirred
Faintly at the faithful word;
Then the knight drew very near,
And the church was full of fear;
Wings of the black cherubim
Made the altar lights burn dim.
Then he rent the shroud in twain,
Then he cried as one in pain,
“By the deed that we have done,
By the weird that we have won,

Yea, by Mary, most of might,
Yea, by Jesu, Light of Light,
Thou shalt ride with me to-night."

Then the lady sat upright,
All the other terrors fled,
For she did as he had said.

II.

So the bridegroom and the bride
Rode in peace and love and pride,
Softly through the gracious night;
For the horse of hell trod light,
Bearing ever to the right;
And they kept the church in sight
As they rode along the sea,
Till they came to Elverlea.
Then no elves were dancing there,
But a lady, wan and fair,
Clad in raiment of despair,
Watered violet and rose,
Weeping, if she might unclothe
All the sweetness of the May,
As the weird upon her lay

Over Elverlea to stray,
Till the night should be as day,
And the rose and violet
Blossom, when the sun was set,
Undescried of living men ;
And the flowers were open then.

Spake Sir Victor, “ Lady, ride
With the bridegroom and the bride ;
There is room upon the selie,
And we ride in state to hell.”
“ Mary mother shield you well,”
Sobbed the Lady Rosalie ;
“ Two are lost, but wherefore three ?”
Seven steps the lady fled,
Then she rested, being dead.

Victor said to Rosalie,
“ Do you fear to ride with me ?
It is merry where we go,
And the end is hard to know.”
“ We are one, and she apart ;
I am jealous of your heart.
By ourselves we loved and fell,
Let me be your all in hell,”
Rosalie to Victor said :
And she put her marble head

Closer to the burning breast
Where she seemed to take her rest.

So they rode to Engelbourne,
And the cross beside the thorn,
Where the heath is most forlorn,
Where the twain were knit in one,
Where the dark, sweet deed was done.
And the courser almost fell

By the broken holy well.

Lady Rosalie lit down,
Hung the tatters of her crown
On the cross, and bending low,
Till it ached, her neck of snow,
With her lips, so cool and sweet,
Kissed the lichens from the feet.

Then she spake unto her lord,
As she sank upon the sward,
"Let us rest awhile and weep
While we may, for hell is deep ;
Down in hell we may not see."

"What is that to thee and me?"
And his fiery face turned pale,
And he drew her by the veil,
Set her on the silken selle

Of the fiery horse of hell.

Then a star fell in the east,
Then the bitter wind increased,
Then the horse neighed mightily,
And he stood upon the sea ;
And the waves beneath his feet
Foamed again for very heat ;
Yet he did not sink therein,
For his heart was great with sin.

So they rode upon the water,
Where they left a trail of slaughter,
Filmy pools of gleaming red ;
Was it Rosalie that bled ?
Was it One with drooping head,
Following ever as they fled ?
Bleeding as He too were slain,
With one hand upon the rein,
And with one on Rosalie,
Whom Sir Victor did not see.
But he heard the water-maids
Plashing out of seaweed shades,
Out of thorny coral glades,
Out of shallows of salt fens ;
For the lovelorn mermaidens,

In a silver-breasted throng,
Followed where the waves were strong.
And the lovers rode along,
Keeping measure to a song,
Called the Song of Jealousy,
Which he made for Rosalie.

So they went upon the waves,
To the isle of evil graves,
Where the goodly ship went down
With the baron of renown,
Where pale Rosalie's good sire
Saw the false bright beacon fire,
Lit by Victor in the night,
Lit to slay him in her sight;
And he also, being slain,
Put a hand upon the rein,
And a hand on Rosalie,
So that Victor should not see;
And she also saw him not
While she wept for Victor's lot,
With her head upon his breast,
That she strove to cool to rest.
So they went about the isle
Thrice, and thrice she tried to smile,

When her bridegroom sought to say,
“ Shall we be at home by day ?”
Then, between the living dead,
The great horse sank down like lead,
Through a never-lighted cave,
Where the black and oily wave
Seemed as clammy as the grave,
Into the unfathomed deep,
Where the sleek sea-serpents sleep,
Each within his slimy lair,
Fed upon foul things made fair ;
And the mermaids tore their hair
When they saw them sinking there,
From the pleasant moonlight air
Into the bleak gulf of death.
And they sang with wailing breath,
“ For awhile they loved too well,
Therefore they go down to Hell.
One Who lies in wait to slay
Planted thorns on life’s highway.
Who were they to hinder this ?
Therefore they have lost their bliss,
For they did not make the road,
And they did not make the goad

Wherewithal He made them go
By the way they do not know."

III.

So they came unto the city
Of the king who hath no pity;
And that city needs for light
Sun by day nor moon by night;
It is lighted in such wise
By the king's devouring eyes,
Flashing through the dusky air,
For the eyes are everywhere.
And we call the city Hell,
But the people there who dwell
Name it by another name,
And no man may speak the same.
And the golden gates of it,
Where the purple shadows flit,
Where the mighty warders sit,
Are not shut by night or day;
For the city people say,
"Wherefore keep the souls away,
Souls that long to enter in
To the harvest of their sin?"

Though the taste be harsh thereof,
Yet it is the food we love ;
They will be content to stay,
Stay with us, who are as they.”

As the city's dreadful light
Flashed into the watery night,
All the white mermaidens fled
From the damned and from the dead.
Then the Lady Rosalie,
Pushing back the blinding sea,
Lifting up a drooping head,
Heaved a little sigh, and said,
“Now my judgment is begun,
Now my rest will soon be won.”
And Sir Victor's reins grew slack,
And he staggered and fell back ;
But she held him safe in selle,
And she kissed him close and well,
And they entered into hell,
Where the angel Azazel,
Brother unto Gabriel,
Who shall be Evangelist
Of the birth of Antichrist,
Veiled his jewelled wings, and cried
To the bridegroom and the bride,

"Highly favoured of my lord,
Enter into your reward!"

By the light of that dread place
Rosalie beheld a face
As of One Who went in pain,
With one hand upon her rein,
And with one on Rosalie,
And she turned lest she should see.

But upon her other hand
She beheld another stand,
With a visage pale and grim;
And she spake in fear to him,
"Who art thou to hold my rein?"
"I am he whom thou hast slain.
Woe is me to meet thee here!
For indeed I loved thee dear."
"Who is this that walks beside?"
"He whom thou hast crucified."
Victor lifted up his head,
With a dreadful voice he said,
"Take good heed, my Rosalie,
These be they that blinded me."
"Yea, because he would not see."
For the pain and for the light
That had chased the balmy night

Her sick eyes began to swim,
But she held her peace at him.

So they came before his throne
Who shall reap where sin hath sown ;
But she could not see the king,
Though she felt the dragon wing
Sharply overshadowing her,
And she saw not any there,
Neither Victor nor her sire,
Nor the horse of gold and fire,
Nor the angry light of Hell,
Nor the angel Azazel ;
Only One who walked the night
Clad upon with tender light,
With a visage pale and sweet,
And with piercèd hands and feet,
Saying, “Staunch My wounded side
With more kisses, O My bride !
For the shadows flee away
Into everlasting day.”

SONG.

COME away, love, come away,
I am weary of my clay ;
Come away, love, come away.

Hear me from thy holy place ;
Come, I have not seen thy face,
Have not tasted of thy grace.

Come, thou lingerest far behind,
And they say that thou art kind,
But thy step is like the wind.

Rise, my queen, and carry me
To the pastures of the sea,
Which are shepherded by thee.

Carry me, I do not care,
To the solitary air
Which thy fulness maketh fair.

Oh, my love, thou fliest fast !
When the rapture shall be past,
When I fall to earth at last,

Waft me on a gentle sigh ;
Lay me softly down to die
Where the last year's roses lie.

THOAS.

WHEN Thoas with Hypsipyle was seen,
The evil wives of Lemnos took their queen
And sold her over sea to be a slave.
Her father, knowing he was soon to die,
Because no help for her or him was nigh,
Said while the ship leapt over the green wave :

“ She fawns upon her master as on me,
And asks him softly what those hags will do.
Will they not pity me ? as if he knew,
And then looks down and laughs upon the sea.
She is too loving ever to be free
By death ; too tender ever to be true.
Few tears will dim those eyes of liquid blue
When these have done their spiteful worst with me ;
As few as bought me life three years ago,

When I was kneeling at my daughter's side.
Now the salt wind unbinds her yellow curls,
Because I prayed for what I did not know,
When all the elders of my people died.
Have you the garlands? are you ready, girls?"

HYPSIPYLE.

THE sons of Jason, in Adrastus' train,
Found their pale mother where the snake had
slain

Her princely fosterling Archemorus ;
Nor knew her, but she knew them by the charm
That Jason hung upon the eldest's arm,
And kissed them greedily, and then spake thus:—

“ Ah, gentle sons, your father was a king,
And long ago your mother was a queen ;
Then I was fair, and worthy to be seen
Of you, who blossom in a fruitless spring,
Nor ripen into deeds for bards to sing,
Nor will inherit that which we have been,
When to young eyes the earth seemed young
and green ;
But he was snared by a fair, evil thing.

And now you see me, I am weak and grey,
And cannot be of any help to you ;
For, darlings, you have found me very late,
I scarcely missed you when you were away,
And you were near me, and I never knew ;
Not knowing, it was easier to wait."

A LOVE MATCH.

I AM happy ; I do not show it
You say, but I have my will
At last, and if we two know it,
It is better to be quite still.

Once I set my face as a flint,
Once I sharpened my tongue like a sword ;
Then I battled, and did not stint :
Now, now I have my reward

In the peace that has nothing to tell,
In the life that has only to live :
We know one another so well,
The rest we know too, and forgive.

What is it you wish us to say
Or to do? Is it rapture you miss?
Should we always be fainting away
In your sight, in an exquisite kiss?

Do not think we have secrets to hide,
Or a treasure we fear will be spent;
I have all when I sit by his side,
There is no more love to invent.

A hush more sweet than I sought
Has fallen on him and on me:
You ask, Is it all as I thought?
No, why should I wish it to be?

Would I barter the trance of noonday
For the stormy glimpses of morn,
And the height of the level highway
For steep thickets of flowering thorn?

Though the flowers unplucked lie behind,
The white sun goes shining before,
Where we follow and drink up the wind,
That pants to a far-away shore.

But you think we shall weary, too,
When the weary sun sinks from the skies;
But the twilight will come, and the dew
Will fall like a seal on our eyes.

Do not think that I find it lonely
In the hush of the hot sunbeam,
Though the babe at my breast seems only
A dream growing out of a dream.

HOTHOUSE FLOWERS.

WHEN the summer time is done
And the winter is begun,
There are flowers still that do not die ;
And they often grow in grace,
In a dull, unlovely place
Where clouds gather and the black winds sigh.

If the earth too have her year,
And her happy summer wear
Into barren autumn by-and-by,
It is well the flowers should rest
In a dimly-scented nest,
Where they need not look upon the sky.

If fair flowers of far away
Shall be farnished to decay

By the common herbs that grow anigh,
Let them hide themselves awhile,
Till a sweeter summer's smile
Strengthen them to lift their heads on high.

If the world of men is old,
And the heart of men is cold,
And the river of their mirth runs dry,
And we try to cheat our woe
With a tale of long ago,
Will they mock the hothouse flowers, and why?

ἘΡΩΣ ΜΟΥΣΑΓΕΤΗΣ.

THE mother of the Muses is
The Memory of Love,
Who still goes fasting from the kiss
She had from him above.

The children of the ageless child
Think they are fatherless,
And do not heed their mother mild,
Who walks the wilderness.

She walks the wilderness alone ;
Her daughters dance with Love,
Who dances where low waters moan
Among the flowers thereof :

He dances, and they follow him,
Who goes unknown before,
Now downcast with soft eyes and dim,
Now radiant, girt for war.

He always goes with minstrelsies
And garlands on the head,
Whose leaves are full of mysteries,
Even if they be dead.

They follow him with broken pace,
Panting, with little ease,
And cannot see the glowing face,
Nor catch the fragrant knees.

And he beholds their misery,
And with their failing breath
They call him Immortality,
And for a moment Death :

Also they call him Pitiless,
Until the daughters meet
The mother in the wilderness,
And they have bleeding feet :

And then, to ease his children's pain,
Love puts his pomp away,
And is a little child again ;
But, ah ! his hair is grey.

MUSIC.

A SPIRIT came out from the Lord
To play on the spirit of man,
That thrilled like a wind-shaken chord
When the hymn of the ages began ;

And the spirit at first was a light,
Playing over their souls as a glass,
And the whiteness thereof, in their sight,
Was full of fair colours that pass.

The spirit again was a stream,
Wherein their own faces seemed fair ;
Till they looked and saw new faces gleam
More beautiful still in the air.

And they faded and left them alone ;
But they fashioned, and were not forlorn,
The ghosts of that beauty in stone,
And the word and the deed were twin-born.

And triumph and joy and defeat,
And the far-away echo of wrong,
Were musical, holy, and sweet,
For the spirit was changed to a song.

And thereafter they sought to the truth,
And the seeking was more than the sought ;
For the world was forsaking her youth,
And the spirit was changed to a thought.

The spirit is changed to a sound,
Vague, shapeless, without any speech ;
It is gone forth, being unbound,
Blind, aimless, of infinite reach,

That the age of our spirits might melt,
And the noise of our strife be at one,
In the raptures that never were felt
At the deeds that have never been done ;

Of a country where uttermost bliss
And anguish are almost the same,
Of whose life we know nothing but this—
It is, and it has not a name ;

Where the perfume goes up from the flowers,
Where the lustre goes up from the dew,
That life which we know not is ours,
And the spirit's last song is most true ;

For we are what we do not know,
We shall have what we do not dream ;
And our joys, and our deeds, and our woe
Are nothing, whatever they seem.

And the eyes of the soul shall see ;
We shall find what we have not sought,
When the spirit is spirit, and free,
Not a sight, not a song, not a thought.

Are the wings of the spirit broken,
For the sound of his flying is still ?
Is the promise ineffably spoken,
For the silence alone to fulfil ?

It is darkness and silence again,
The shadowy wings are not spread,
And we echo their murmur in vain ;
He is still, he is dumb, and not dead.

Yea, being a spirit, to die
Was never the law of his birth,
And he would not have needed to fly,
Except to come down to the earth.

But he rises himself, through the seas
Of the fathomless heaven, and sings,
Floating back to his Master at ease,
With our hearts folded up in his wings.

APRIL TEARS.

WHEN boastful hopes that lived on high
Have fallen to die
On faded leaves of middle earth,
Where we too lie,
Both playthings of a passing game
Of little worth,
Not letters of a deathless name,
For earth to worship evermore,
What shall be left worth living for,
To light the shadows of the years?
The watery sun, the whispering breeze,
That sighs about the budding trees,
And April tears.

When we have learnt that joys have stings,
And also wings

To fly away from middle earth,
And learnt what brings
Glory to shame, and more to less,
Fatness to dearth,

And stains fair things with faithlessness
Before they pass for evermore ;

What shall be left worth living for,
To feed the famine of the years ?

To chase the joy we may not keep,
And to be weary, and to weep
Soft April tears.

When we perceive that all our deeds
Are but as seeds,

• Cast forth in barren middle earth
Like idle weeds ;

That whoso wills shall trample down
And mar their birth,

And that no might and no renown
Abides in honour evermore ;

What shall be left worth living for,
To heal the fever of the years ?

To cool at eve our weary eyes
With coolness of the dewy skies,
And April tears.

Yea, after all, we overlive,
Lose, bear, forgive,
Are sifted here on middle earth
As in a sieve.
With us, who shall not long outstay
Our woe, our mirth,
Till I shall also pass away
To what abides for evermore,—
I count these things worth living for,
That come again in passing years,—
To recollect and not regret,
Or, what is sweeter, to forget,
In April tears.

•

WISH AND WILL.

WHEN the world was younger,
Wish and Will were brothers
Born, when gods were plenty,
To be gods like others.

Wish was always young,
Will was always old ;
Will had halting feet,
Wish had wings of gold.

Will had hands to clasp,
Wish had lips to kiss ;
Will had nought to seek,
Wish had nought to miss.

In the halls of Odin,
Up above the sky,
All the gods together
Wondered, "Shall we die?"

Will said, "I live always,
Whatsoe'er ye do;"
Wish said, "What is dying?
Is it something new?"

Will, and the gods with him,
Brewed the cup of life;
Wish just then was wooing
The white Sun to wife.

Will, and the gods with him,
Drank from out the cup;
Though the dregs were bitter,
Yet he drank them up.

When Wish came among them,
All began to sigh;
All the gods together
Murmured, "Wish will die."

Wish made answer lightly,
“ Must I taste of death ?”

Will made answer gravely,
“ Or my bitter breath ;

“ For my breath tastes bitter
Of the cup of life.

Kiss me, be immortal,
And my bounden wife.”

“ If I turn to woman,
If I turn to slave,
What shall be my wages ?”
“ Children good and brave.”

Wish kissed Will and tasted
Of his bitter breath ;
“ Will said, “ Now I love you,”—
Wish said, “ This is death.”

SONNETS.

SNOW IN MARCH.

MUSING upon the ministry of pain,
To whet the edge of joy by suffering,
I walked upon a fitful day of spring ;
Even as I said, " Short sunshine after rain,
And then the heavy clouds are black again,"
Lo riding on the east wind's dusky wing,
The haggard queen of snows came travelling,
To smirch the sunset with her funeral train
Of watery yellow dulled with ashen grey,
Which wrapt the bleak plain country up from sight ;
But ere the setting of that chill spring day
Bare trees pierced through her skirt of tearful light ;
Yet in its shadow, as it passed away,
The fruitful hills were stained a livid white.

A CHILL IN SUMMER.

I WENT upon a meadow bright with gold
Of buttercups, which glistened on the green
Of summer grass, veiled with a filmy sheen
Of gossamer, whereby a river rolled
His shrunken waters by a city old,
Leaving large space of poisonous ooze between
The herbage and his waves, which were not clean,
And in the air there was a touch of cold.
Then my thoughts troubled me, I knew not
why ;
But everything seemed still, and nought at rest.
The sun grew dim, the faint wind seemed to sigh,
The pale blue seemed to shiver as unblest,
White fleecy clouds came scudding up the sky,
And turned to ashen darkness in the west.

FALLING LEAVES.

ON a bare hill a thin elm's spindle crest
Was glorified by kisses of the sky,
Where harvest sunshine made the shrill wind die
Till evening, and the waning year had rest.
Only about a blackened empty nest
Some lonely rooks kept an unrestful cry ;
Below the babbling brook of reeds was dry
In the green valley trending to the west,
Green still ; on either side the lands were
ploughed,
Whence carrying scanty sheaves of ill-saved grain
On creaking wheels went by a broken wain,
Whereon three harvest men who whistled loud ;
But in the shadow of a rising cloud
Two scarlet leaves fell in a pool of rain.

A WINTER SUNSET.

ALL day along a river full of glee
I guided, between flowery isles of light,
My shallop without compass, till at night
Keen moonbeams sparkled on a shoreless sea,
And on some spirit in the boat with me ;
Yet I was nothing daunted at his sight,
But marvelling how the darkness there was
bright,
I slept, in musing what the dawn could be.
Dreaming I sang ; in dreams 'tis bright to die.
Athwart the flooded mead the dead bell tolled
Indeed, and then I saw, yet half awake,
The wintry elms against the wintry sky,
A sullen purple against sullen gold,
Each brighter, deeper, in the shallow lake.

DIE JUNGFRAU.

A HOLY maiden of the giant race
Who cannot live and look upon the sun,
Who count their jewellery in caverns dun
All day, but in the night they show their face,
Would not return ere morning to her place,
But said, "My little race will soon be run,
Death will be easiest when I have won
That sight, since I must die in any case."
So the light smote her with a slaying blow
That she for very pain half turned away,
Yet on her dying cheek she felt the glow,
And as she turned to stone she knelt to pray,
Where, bowing underneath her hood of snow,
She waits in peace until the Judgment Day.

Ο ΑΙΩΝ ΠΑΙΣ ΕΣΤΙ ΠΑΙΖΩΝ·
ΠΑΙΔΟΣ Η ΒΑΣΙΛΗΗΗ.

AN orphan child lay in the purple glow
Of sunset, on the hill where she had played
All day with heather-bells, nor marked the shade
Of night and autumn creeping from below.
A lonely lord came by and bade her go
And be his daughter, but she was afraid ;
So he alone plunged down the pine-wood glade.
A cottage mother came with locks of snow,
And bade the motherless to board and bed ;
She turned unheeded down a foxglove dell.
A nun came by on pilgrimage, who said,
“ Come, dream of God and Heaven in cloister cell.”
The little one half raised her golden head,
Then stooped and plucked another heather-bell.

ŒDIPUS.

THE king who had his mother unto wife,
When all the sin and woe before him lay,
Upholding in much pain a dreary sway,
Endured ; his weaker mother took the knife
Of death to cut the galling knots of life
Unwisely ; for the tangle of the day
Is spread anew about our morning way,
Though night awhile roll up the web of strife.
Yet now we feign the gods reveal the lore,
Which life's too cloudy voyage failed to teach
By signs of sky or sea or answering speech
To souls uncertain of themselves before,
At once to ghosts who stumble on the beach
Of death's unvisited, mute, trackless shore.

THE LOVE OF SOPHOCLES.

HE clothed my beauty as the changeful day
Is clad in many-coloured change of fire,
And told me he was drinking in desire,
Which made me very happy as I lay
Looking up to the grand head which had been
grey,
But now was flushed with youth to be my hire :
I said, putting my curls about his lyre,
“ Let thy sons rail, thou art as young as they.”
Now when I thought to read him like a book,
And tune my little soul to his high lays,
The light of love within his eyes burnt dim
And is gone out, and with a far-off look
He puts me from him gently, for he says
A ravening beast has gone away from him.

TO ARISTOCRATS.

WHEN the dumb many lift their voice on
high,

Who do not heed what subtle things are said
In ancient volumes they have never read,
Nor care to listen till the wise reply,
Let all who care to hurry pass thee by,
And bid them all Godspeed and bow the head,
And sit alone and commune with the dead,
And learn at leisure to be still and die.

Why, for thy pride, should men be comfortless?
Wherefore methinks it were not well to wage
An idle warfare with a busy age;
But fold clean hands and cherish quietness,
And watch the world grow more while we grow
less,
And others build our tomb or hermitage.

THE DAUGHTERS OF PANDARUS.

WE were the nurslings of four goddesses,
And grew together in glad innocence,
Nor ever felt the need of a defence
From other's envy at our blessedness,
Who did not sin by boasting or excess ;
Yet suddenly there came, we knew not whence,
A blinding whirl of wings, a numbing sense
Of claws, which bore us with unwounding stress
Into a darkness, somewhere under earth,
Lit by eyes gleaming under cloudy brows
Of three, who swathed our maiden limbs with
girth
Of thick soft black, and bound us with sad vows,
Where we sit very still, away from mirth,
Watching for ever in Hell's empty house.

LA CENCI.

MOST pitiful of maidens,—after one,
Who bore a Son more sorrowful than she,
And yielded Him to die on Calvary,
To heal whatever thou hast borne and done—
Ere thy short race of shame and pain be run,
Out of thy store of costly agony
We pray thee dash our dull prosperity,
That we through thee may win what thou hast
won,—
Meek, mute contempt, which trembles on thy
tongue,
For earth, and hope which lights thy counte-
nance;
Whose holy heart of maidenhood was wrung
By slimy thrall of nameless sufferance,
Till it was like a blithe deliverance
To come to the clean pain of dying young.

SERENA LOQUITUR.

ALTHOUGH I was becalmed on the dead
 sea,
 Nor felt the breath of any wind that bore
 My pilgrim bark to any earthly shore,
Yet birds of Paradise flew over me,
And still the pinnacle of my thought was free
 To cast her anchor in the golden floor
 Of Heaven, where all my vows were gone before ;
So that I voyaged nowhither cheerily,
 Who was not wounded sore in any strife,
Nor overtasked that I should faint for rest,
Nor eaten up with craving foolishness ;
 For I have eaten of the fruit of life,
And crowned me with the flower of happiness,
Yet when I died I was much happiest.

A FEW PRESS ON TO THE ETERNAL
TOWERS.

A FEW press on to the eternal towers,
Clear to their eyes, which crown the narrow
way,

And find Christ's cross an easy load, they say,
To them, for whom His thorny crown hath flowers;
Yet such have need of more, who ply their powers
Below, for one another and to-day,

And things which grow as fast as they decay,
Who hive the ripened sweets of earthly hours.

Both made of God, both used of God, then why
Are those His darling children, these accurst?
What gain to hope the best and fear the worst?

Or are these moody rhymes another lie,
Hatched by that ancient dragon, who at first
Said, to deceive with truth, "Ye shall not die"?

WHEN NEMESIS AND AIDOS HEARD
NONE PRAY.

WHEN Nemesis and Aidōs heard none pray
Aright, with upward face and loyal song,
Then the wise found them not, though seeking
long,
And said, Alas ! for we have lost the way
Unto the stars and everlasting day ;
And many wept, The wicked are made strong ;
But most rejoiced, as free for lesser wrong ;
Death, peering up through the thick charnel clay,
Said, “ I am left ; nor fear my ghastly hue,
For I have many shapes and none are true ;
But I have a true dungeon, without bars,
Bitter for sinners ; and I truly know
A secret pathway for the just to go
Through the dark, under earth, to other stars.”

POLYXENE.

POLYXENE, when Pyrrhus took her hand
To lead her slowly to the slaughter-place,
Sprang up with a glad blush on her wan face,
And said, "Methinks you do not understand
How I am drawn with Venus' silken band
Unto your sire, or you would go apace;
For he is mine, and I desire his grace
More than I love the people of my land.

I want to rest upon the soft green grave
Of my dead lord, whose dear will sets me free,
Who knows I am a queen and not a slave.
Let girls and girlish men make moan for me,
Weeping and wringing by the sullen sea
Chained hands that were not clean or strong to
save."

THOREAU AND THE BHAGAVATGHITA.

WHEN young Earth's rivers ran with morn-
ing gold,

The living streams of poverty increased

The spiritual vintage of the east,

But, overflowing, left the virgin mould

Bare, and the southern land too early old.

Yet through Time's noisy waves they never
ceased

To flow, but poured some precious drops at least
On lips made bleak by northern greed and cold.

So strong Alpheus, whom his love kept pure,

Traversed an untracked pilgrimage of yore,

Under the bitter sea to Arethuse,

And was content to pour a nameless tide,

Far from Olympia's splendour, at her side

Into the busy port of Syracuse.

THE CUMÆAN SIBYL.

FEARING the end of all her prophecies,
The Virgin Witch of Cumæ from her place
Arose, with ruddy and unwrinkled face,
And hungry, hollow, cavernous blue eyes,
Because at Bethlehem she heard cradle cries,
To ask oblivious drugs which might efface
Christ's image, since she did not hope His grace.
But Circe answering, "Thou must still be wise ;
Thy maiden flesh is not as other clay,"
She measured back the rosy dimpled seas,
Nor bowed beneath her burden of despair,
But trod with steady feet a sunless way
To those just ghosts, who almost dwell at ease,
With purple fillets in her snowy hair.



Epilogue.

“ET EGO IN ARCADIA FUI.”

ON happy hills of springy thyme,
Where winds refreshed with odours blow,
In dewy vales where round the lime
Brown bees go buzzing to and fro,
This gracious gift was given me,
That I should be in Arcady.

I did not gather honey there,
I shored no flock, I milked no kine ;
The empty sweetness of the air
Sustained me then, for which I pine.
My hunger now must nourish me,
For I was once in Arcady.

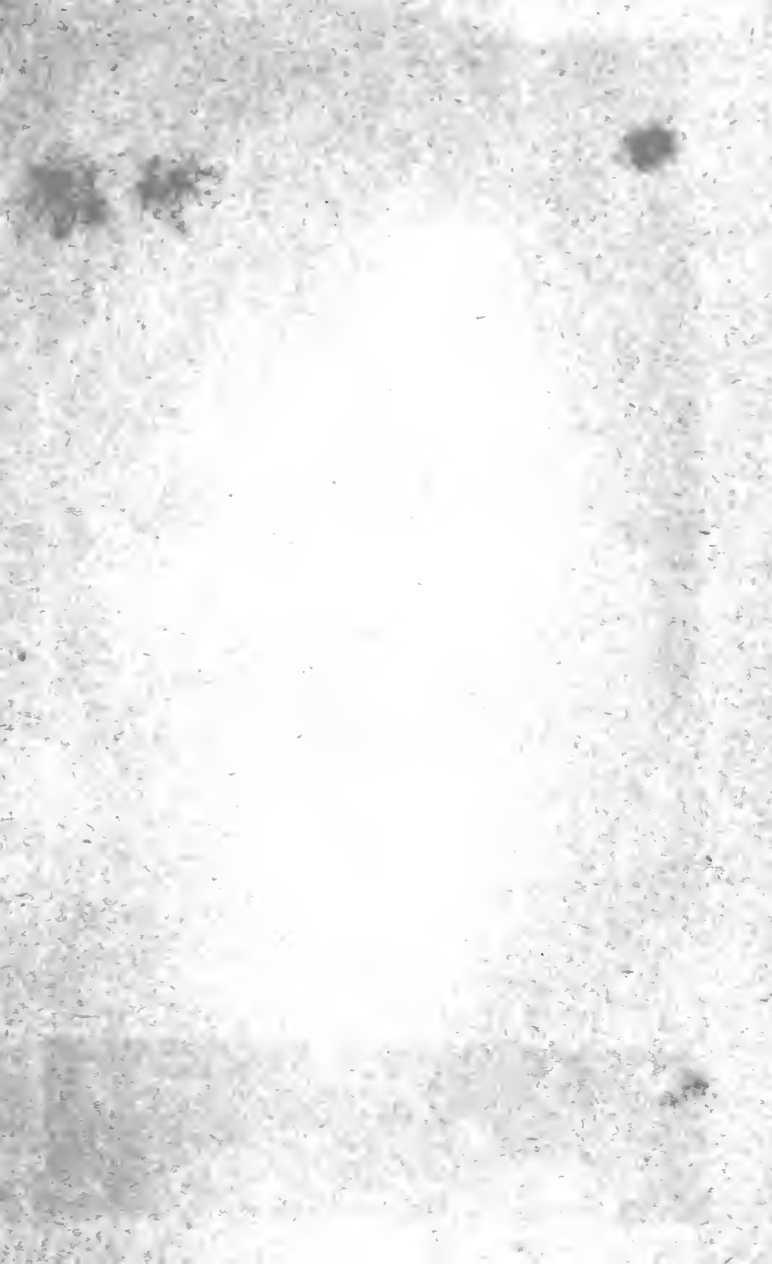
Therefore I go with empty hands,
And girt about with nakedness,
To pastures of untrodden lands,
Whose shepherd's name is Pitiless.

In sooth it doth not profit me
That I have been in Arcady.

My pleasance was a dreamy song,
Too faint for men to hear below,
Though gusts thereof should linger long
Between the sunshine and the snow;
Will they for this remember me,
Saying, He was of Arcady?

But they will say, "Why lengthen out
Dim echoes of a single air?
Why toss one dainty thought about
Till we forget it might be fair?"
And speak harsh things concerning me,
Not in the speech of Arcady.

They seem to see; a darker hour
Shall show if they or I saw right;
For bondage is the price of power,
And leafless trees let through the light.
So write upon my tomb for me,
"I, too, have been in Arcady."



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